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AIMS AND SCOPE

Psychotherapy and Politics International explores the psychological implications and consequences of the political, and the political implications of the psyche, both in theory and in practice. The premise of this journal is that psychotherapy is a social and political activity that asks us to examine the processes of self-deception that perpetuate individual unhappiness, as well as social structures that are inequitable and oppressive. Historically, political concepts and values, and their effects, have not been central to the therapeutic process, although that has changed. The journal welcomes articles from all modalities or schools of psychotherapy internationally and from across the political spectrum.

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EDITORIAL

Decolonisation and psychoanalysis

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INTRODUCTION

This special issue of *Psychotherapy and Politics International* is dedicated to the connections of psychoanalysis with colonialism and more precisely with decolonisation. The authors of the articles are psychoanalysts and academics who have reflected on the colonial order in previous works. Most of them, members of the Ubuntu International Network of Psychoanalysis and Colonialism, participated in the network's Second International Colloquium on Decolonisation and Psychoanalysis—Colonial Discontent: Our Lands, Languages, Bodies, Memories, and Horizons of Transformation, held from 13 to 15 November 2023 at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

As a testimony of the colloquium, this issue is composed of eight peer-reviewed articles and a Note from the Frontline. The authors come mainly from formerly colonised countries, primarily Brazil, but also Mexico, Malaysia, South Africa, and Guyana, although two of them are currently working in the United States. These places of enunciation illuminate the theme of the special issue.

This editorial begins with a historical overview of the connections between psychoanalysis and colonialism. Then, as in other editorials of *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, we present the papers published in this issue. Finally, we dedicate a section to the Ubuntu International Network and the 2023 colloquium.

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PSYCHOANALYSIS, COLONIALISM AND DECOLONISATION: THE HISTORY THAT LED US TO THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

If we ignore colonialism, we will not fathom the depth of meaning of Freud's references first to the 'savages' who would be 'closer to the primitives' (1912/1996a, pp. 11–12) and then to female sexuality conceived as a 'dark continent' (1926/1996b, p. 199). Perhaps the very idea of the ego as a product and expression of a kind of colonisation of the id cannot be understood without contemplating the colonisation of America, Africa, and Asia by Europe. Many of Freud's and his successors' ideas could be historically determined by the colonial order in which they appear.

The colonial order and Freudian theory are inseparable. Psychoanalysis was born and developed in a world sustained by colonialism and neocolonialism. This was not explicitly recognised and studied by Freud but by some of his followers, as we now see in a summary of what has been developed in detail elsewhere (see Pavón-Cuéllar, 2024).

The first Freudians to ponder colonialism between 1910 and 1940 used psychoanalytic concepts to justify colonial domination. This was the case with Owen Berkeley-Hill and Claude Dangar Daly in India, Barend Jacob Frederick Laubscher in South Africa, John Ritchie in Rhodesia, René Laforgue in Morocco, Jorge Carrión in Mexico, and Arthur Ramos, Afrânio Peixoto, and Julio Pires Porto-Carrero in Brazil. These authors tended to denigrate, animalise, and pathologise the colonised African and American natives, either by diagnosing them *en masse* or by reducing them to their bodies, their drives, their unconscious, and the pleasure principle. The same authors also tended to praise the European colonisers, conceptualising them as the ego, consciousness, rationality, and reality principle. These representations of the agents and victims of colonisation logically justify the former colonising the latter.

After the first Freudian apologists for colonialism, most of Freud's followers critically reflected on colonial domination and its effects on subjectivity. The first Freudian critics of colonialism seem to have been the Brazilian Oswald de Andrade and the Martinican René Ménil, who gave psychoanalysis, between 1920 and 1930, a clearly subversive anticolonial orientation. Later, between 1930 and 1950, subversion gave way to explanation in the works of the white psychoanalysts Wulf Sachs in South Africa and Octave Mannoni in Madagascar, who resorted to psychoanalytic theory to explain the subjective drama of the colonised. This kind of explanation, especially as proposed by Mannoni, was harshly criticised in the 1950s by Martinicans Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon. Both authors denounced how psychological explanations concealed the objective, material violence of colonialism.

Fanon never lost sight of colonial domination in its cultural, socio-economic, and cultural materiality. However, this did not prevent him from studying its ideological, discursive, and subjective effects. Psychological complexes do not appear here, as in Mannoni, as predispositions or predetermining factors of colonisation, but as consequences and manifestations of colonialism. This is the same for other authors from the 1950s to the 1960s,

including Albert Memmi in Tunisia and the lesser-known Santiago Ramírez and Francisco González Pineda in Mexico.

The connection between the ideological–psychological and socio-economic levels of colonialism became more dialectical between the 1970s and 1990s in authors such as Edouard Glissant in Martinique and Ashis Nandy and Homi Bhabha in India. These authors used psychoanalysis to study the unconscious psychic processes that could accompany and result from colonialism, both in the colonisers and the colonised. Regarding the colonised, Glissant saw a neurosis in them, Nandy an identification with the aggressor, and Bhabha mimicry and stereotypes.

Rather than diagnosing or describing the colonised psychoanalytically, the Palestinian Edward Said revived in the 21st century an interest in the anti-colonial potential of the Freudian heritage that had already interested Andrade and Ménil 80 years earlier. He found this potential in the problematic aspect of Jewish identity for Freud. His approach allows us to understand one of the most violent forms of colonialism in the present: that of the State of Israel over the territories and populations of Palestine.

In recent years, we witnessed a proliferation of authors adopting a psychoanalytic perspective to think about colonialism. These authors tend to situate themselves in the continuation of the classics to which we refer. Sachs, Mannoni, Césaire, Memmi, and Fanon are the main authors who have served Ranjanna Khanna in her reflections. Livio Boni and Sophie Mendelsohn have studied Mannoni's contribution. Said is a fundamental reference for Robert Beshara and Thamy Ayouch. Ayouch also follows the ideas of Homi Bhabha, which are allied with those of Nandy in the reflection of Mrinalini Greedharry in India. Many other authors are mainly inspired by Fanon's work. This is the case with Derek Hook, David Marriot, Lewis Gordon, Karima Lazali, and Lara and Stephen Sheehi.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS SPECIAL ISSUE: EIGHT PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES AND A NOTE FROM THE FRONT LINE

Fanon is the main reference for one of the articles in this special issue: Derek Hook's 'Intersections of Racist Identification, Love and Guilt: On the Vicissitudes of Colonial Masochism'. In this article, Hook analyses a section of *Black Skin White Masks* in which Fanon reflects on the way white colonisers can fantasise and enjoy scenes in which they are denigrated and humiliated by the colonised. Hook perceives here an unconscious colonial masochistic enjoyment that could be addressed by a psychoanalysis committed to decolonisation.

Similar to Hook's article, Sheldon George's 'Knotting the Psyche: White Fantasy and Racial Violence' concerns white fantasies that mediate the relationship with black subjects. The fantasy that interests George is that of totality that masks the reality of the white subject's

lack. This fantasy of totality is correlative to racial violence. Although Sheldon focuses on racism, his reflections clearly point to the colonialism from which racism comes. It is in the colonial matrix that white fantasies are formed, such as those of totality in George and masochistic ones in Hook.

Both Hook and George deal with fantasies and other unconscious processes enjoyed by whites and colonisers. Conversely, Andréa Máris Campos Guerra and Monica Lima are interested in unconscious processes suffered by colonised and coloured subjects. In her article 'Crypt: About the colonised unconscious', Guerra proposes the concept of 'crypt' to describe a defence mechanism by which the experience of colonisation is enclosed as a drive intensity without being translated into the linguistic sign. The crypt is something real that resists the symbolic, unlike the operations described by Lima in her text 'African Diaspora, Interlanguages, and the Unconscious', including idealisation and abjection, identifications and the vacillation of identifications. These operations occur in language, and it is there that they are unravelled through a literary work.

Language is also the field of reflection of Nayara Paulina Fernandes Rosa, Ana Paula Farias, and Mariana Mollica in their article 'Colonisation and Language: From Imprisonment by the Colonial Language to Subversion through Lalangue'. This article focuses on the psychic effects of a specific aspect of colonisation: linguistic imposition and the correlative extinction of native tongues. The extinction of indigenous languages is equivalent to the disappearance of the original cultures in which those languages are spoken, each culture with their unique ways of conceiving the internal and external world, subjectivity, and the objective universe. Native cultures can serve to challenge psychoanalysis, as in the article by Juliana Vieira and Thais Klein and in that of David Pavón-Cuéllar. In the first, 'Provocations from Amerindian Perspectivism to Psychoanalysis', the authors engage in a dialogue between Freudian theory and Amerindian perspectivism conceptualised by Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Batalha Viveiros de Castro. In the second article, 'Decolonisation of Psychoanalysis and Mesoamerican Conceptions of Subjectivity', Pavón-Cuéllar proposes a decolonisation of psychoanalytic theory based on the critical evaluation of the ancestral knowledge of the native peoples of Mexico and Central America.

Similar to Pavón-Cuéllar, Ahmad Fuad Rahmat critically approaches psychoanalysis and seeks to decolonise it in his essay 'Exploring the Mother's Geography: On Klein's Settler Unconscious'. This article unravels a hidden form of settler colonialism in Melanie Klein's psychoanalytic theory, specifically in her ideas about love, guilt, and reparation, where Fuad detects a colonial logic of appropriation and domination of spaces. Fuad even proposes the term *settler unconscious* to refer to what is revealed in Kleinian conceptualisations.

While Fuad and Pavón-Cuéllar seek to theoretically decolonise psychoanalysis, Anna Turriani makes a practical, Freudian-inspired decolonial proposal in her Note from the Frontline, 'Decolonial Approaches to Multidisciplinary Supervision: A Case Extract'. This note

illustrates how decoloniality can guide supervision, specifically the supervision of public health workers in Brazil, focusing on educators working in peripheral and vulnerable territories. The account of the experience exemplifies much of what is at stake in the other texts in this special issue.

Despite all their differences, the articles summarised here share both a psychoanalytic perspective and a desire for decolonisation. This desire takes two forms: that of decolonising psychoanalysis and that of using psychoanalysis to understand colonialism and achieve decolonisation. The comprehensive and decolonising use of psychoanalytic theory predominates in the texts by Hook, George, Guerra, Lima, and Fernandes Rosa et al., as well as in Turriani's Note from the Frontline, while the decolonisation of the Freudian heritage appears as a central purpose in Fuad, Pavón-Cuéllar, and perhaps also to some extent in Vieira and Klein.

UBUNTU NETWORK AND COLLOQUIUM

Most works included in this special issue come from the Ubuntu International Network of Psychoanalysis and Colonialism. Established throughout 2021, first online, the Ubuntu Network focuses on the research and dissemination of studies and clinical practices arising from the intersection between colonialism and the Freudian legacy. It is proposed to carry out a decolonial movement on the geopolitics of the psychoanalytic field. It takes up the classic assumptions of psychoanalysis and subverts them from their reverse or dark side (Dussel, 1992).

The Ubuntu Network understands that modern rationality was structured symbolically and materially in the configuration of a normative Western flat mirror (Quijano, 2011). Western reason ideologically condenses hegemonic values that perpetuate relationships of domination. Some of its consolidation strategies are Eurocentrism, whiteness, patriarchy, sexism, class oppression, ableism, and ageism. In this mirror, the discursive demarcation of the Other, bodies, races, genders, classes, subjectivities, and sociability are projected. From alienated submission to emancipatory separation, neocolonial strategies advance in dialectical conflict with counter-, anti-, post-, or decolonial criticism (González Casanova, 2007).

Gathered around this research programme, initially 10 and today 13 researchers dedicate themselves every two years to a work plan. The network dedicated its first year to scientific exchanges between its founding members. Always with written work and oral presentations, we were able to visit countries and borders based on imperial incursions and their contemporary effects. To date, eight meetings have been held.

In the second year, we published the book *Ubuntu: Psychoanalysis and Colonial Inheritance* (Guerra & Lima, 2023). Written in Brazilian Portuguese, the book contains 10 chapters by the

first members of the network. We also promoted the Second International Colloquium on Psychoanalysis and Decolonisation, already mentioned. The colloquium brought together, in addition to the members, more than 400 psychoanalysts at six axis tables, three parallel seminars, more than 120 papers presented, and multiple cultural activities. The colloquium was preceded by a visit to the municipality of Ouro Preto in Minas Gerais, Brazil. The city was developed during the gold cycle in the country's colonial period (18th century). It is known for having been the site of an important episode of revolt and attempted decolonisation, called 'Minas Gerais conspiracy' (*Inconfidência Mineira*).

In 2024, the Ubuntu Network published texts by network collaborators in the periodical *Penumbra* (USA). The network also gained a virtual tab with new writings on the *Collectif de Pantin* website (France), an international reference at the interface of psychoanalysis and decolonisation.

This special issue continues the decolonial turn in psychoanalytic geopolitics, a turn operating from the Global South. The issue strengthens alliances, disseminates other horizons, and imprints an epistemic–political act, a point of no return, on psychoanalytic theory and clinic. We invite each reader to dive into this intersection and extract the effects of its oriented decentralisation!

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PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Intersections of racist identification, love, and guilt: On the vicissitudes of colonial masochism

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ABSTRACT

In a short yet dense section of *Black Skin White Masks*, Frantz Fanon tackles an unexpected topic, namely that of how, within colonial contexts, white subjects might enjoy or fantasize scenes involving their own humiliation or debasement by those they have colonized. These pages make an important contribution to psychoanalytic engagements with the project of decolonization, revealing, as they do, facets of the masochistic unconscious dynamics of colonial racism in which guilt, identification, and sadism/masochism intersect. In this article, I provide a commentary—both expository and in some respects critical—on Fanon's all too brief analysis of such unconscious and/or sublimated scenes. I close with a few remarks on questions and further research questions posed by Fanon's analysis.

KEYWORDS: masochism; identification; racism; guilt; decolonial; Fanon; psychoanalysis

'[A] CERTAIN IDENTIFICATION OF THE WHITE MAN WITH THE BLACK'

In the sixth chapter of *Black Skin White Masks* (Fanon, 1967), in a section focusing on the fantasmatically overdetermined *imago* of the Black man, Fanon takes up a somewhat unexpected topic: the masochistic dimension of white racism. The Black man, argues Fanon, is a target of the white man's racial jealousy and rivalry (the Black man 'is a beast…it is [his] sexual potency which impresses [the white man]' [p. 170]). It quickly becomes that the figure of the white woman succumbing to enjoyment is as much a point of fixation as is the Black man as faceless agent of a type of *jouissance* without measure. The white man becomes, in this sense, the masochistic object of his own racist fantasy. He is repeatedly shown up as

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sexually inferior, as incapable of the fantasmatically exaggerated sexual powers of the Black man.

It is at this point that Fanon, in an ingenious move, turns to the topic of children's literature noting that a similar theme, albeit in a far more disguised form, is apparent there. Addressing American author Bernard Wolfe's idea of the 'ambivalence in the white man' as 'the dominant factor in the white American psychology' (1967, p. 173), and, alongside it, the examples of popular stories which give some form of expression to this ambivalence (such as Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus* stories), Fanon notes the prospect that a repressed 'admiration corresponds to a certain identification of the white man with the Black' (pp. 173–174). It is clear, says Fanon, that the rabbit—who invariably emerges as the victor in the many scrapes that he finds himself in—is the Black man 'in his remarkably ironic and wary disguise' (p. 174). What is in question, of course, is not merely a form of unadmitted identification or envy, but a reaction of 'unconscious masochism' itself the result of the 'rapturous admiration of… Black… prowess' (p. 174). A double move is afoot here. What is tacitly registered, namely the fact of the white man being outstripped, humiliated, shown up as inferior in matters of phallic ingenuity or, by extension, sexual potency, is immediately offset by the relegation of this heroic character, and by extension, the Black man he is thought to represent, to the ranks of the animal.

Improvising on Wolfe's analysis, Fanon identifies several intersecting dynamics at work within the masochistic dimension of white racism. We have the idea, firstly, that in consigning the Black man to inferiority, to 'the Limbo of mankind' (1967, p. 174), that is, to being in every respect the very opposite of his own anxious self ('unworried, gregarious, voluble, muscularly relaxed… exuberant' [p. 175]), the white man has inadvertently created an object of considerable envy. The work of racist counter-identification has, in other words, re-located a series of at once denigrated and yet also wished for, *desired*, attributes in the place of Blackness, and Blackness itself is made responsible for the aggressive envy that results. Yet this suggestion doesn't go quite far enough, for it does not adequately register the factor of guilt nor, arguably, the degree of identification required for this guilt, or need for punishment, to arise.

Fanon goes on to cite Wolfe's (1949) analysis of the motivations of Joel Chandler Harris at some length. It is here that the crucial factor of ambivalent identification as it occurs within white racism can be identified. Harris, according to Wolfe (as cited by Fanon) was 'filled… [with] racial obsessions over above those that tormented the South and, to a lesser extent, all of white America' (1967, p. 175). 'Here again' says Fanon, 'the white man is the victim of his unconscious' (p. 175). Furthermore:

> Harris, the archetype of the southerner, went in search of the… [Black man's] love and claimed that he had won it… [Yet] he was striving for the… [Black man's] hatred, and he reveled in it, in an unconscious orgy of masochism… punishing himself for not being the Black man… Is it not

possible that… the majority of white America, often behave in the same way…? (Wolfe, cited in Fanon, 1967, p. 176)

At first glance, this strikes one as an example of Lacan's imaginary (ego-other/mirror) relation. The ego desperately seeks affirmation—and more than this, a type of narcissistic self-substantiation—in its insistence that the other convey to them an idealizing (ideal-ego affirming) image of themselves as lovable. Such a relationship is always in danger of tipping over into a lethal form of rivalry. While this love-hating aggressivity of the ego's relation to its other/mirror image is evident here, we need to be wary of accepting such a general Lacanian formulation as an adequate explanation. So, while the imaginary dimension remains foundational here, we need also to note the factor of 'an unconscious orgy of masochism', the apparent—and markedly counter-intuitive—result of the white man 'punishing himself for not being the Black man' (Wolfe, cited in Fanon, 1967, p. 175). In short: an additional analytical step is required here, one that foregrounds the white Southerner's 'search [for] the [Black man's] love' (Fanon, 1967, p. 176).

GUILT OVER ENJOYMENT

Perhaps contrary to expectations, this factor of racist love, or, more precisely, of the *racist demand for love from the denigrated other*, is a common and longstanding feature of anti-Blackness. One recalls in this respect the third chapter of Wilderson's (2020) *Afropessimism*, the title of which—'Hattie McDaniel is Dead'—invokes both the character of Mammy in *Gone with the Wind* that McDaniel became famous for playing, and the ceaseless demand made by whites for a type of love-affirmation from those designated as Black. Why this goes beyond the standard parameters of the imaginary ego-other relation—or, alternatively, what makes it a *special, exaggerated case of such a relation*—is, potentially, at least, the factor of guilt. The particular intensity of this need to secure a loving gaze from the place of an other is, presumably, proportionate to the degree of debasement, dehumanization, and violence that, under conditions of anti-Blackness, is invariably directed towards this same other.

We need to be cautious here however, so as not to slip into an overly psychologizing mode of explanation. While we should not neglect the factor of guilt—and particularly the factor of *unconscious* guilt or, more aptly expressed, the *need for punishment*, a properly Freudian point of emphasis—we need also bear in mind that under conditions of coloniality/anti-Blackness, acts of racist denigration or violence *need not occasion any guilt at all*, at least not in ways we might expect (i.e., guilt for causing harm to another). Yet even if no inter-subjective form of guilt is induced by such acts, we can expect that they may well give rise to instances of *jouissance*. A Lacanian perspective proves helpful here, not only by prioritizing, analytically, the factor of *jouissance* over that of affect, but in terms of differentiating between sources/modes of guilt. That is to say, the guilt that may arise in such situations—as

motivating the white subject's searching for the Black man or woman's love—is typically less about what has been done to the Black other, than about the white subject's *relation to their own obscene enjoyment*. It helps here to stress that in Lacanian theory, the 'substance' of a subject's enjoyment is disgusting even to themselves.

So, while psychoanalytically we should always be cautious about making social generalizations about as phenomena as subjective and psychically complex as guilt, we could suggest that white guilt in response to acts of anti-Blackness is first and foremost guilt about enjoying too much, enjoying in ways which the standpoint of an Other might view as unseemly or indecent. Differently put: this guilt results not primarily because of a lapse in intersubjective ethics occurring at the imaginary level—that is, between an ego and a (little) other who serves as stand-in for this ego (a mirror-image other). Rather—and here we take a further step in our argument—the guilt arises as the result of how the white subject might be apprehended by the (big) symbolic Other—the anonymous witness or standpoint of evaluation standing in for Society as such—as indulging in a gratuitous form of enjoyment.

To be caught in such a reverie of *jouissance* is for one's own enjoyment to be shown up as prurient, excessive. To add a further qualification: even if the act of anti-Black derogation or violence might be condoned by the symbolic order, even if it is endorsed by the big Other of the racist symbolic order, what remains nonetheless compromising and guilt-inducing is the degree to which the perpetrator of the act might be witnessed in the quasi-orgasmic enjoyment at what they have done. There are many condoned (legal/acceptable) forms of enjoyment that we are invited, even incited, to indulge in—transgressive/hedonistic rituals, for example, sexual experimentation, various modes of excess, etc.—yet most of us would rather not be witnessed 'getting off' in such ways.

Interestingly however, even if the guilt stems from the white subject's relation to their own enjoyment (as opposed to from a sense of harm done), the white subject will often nonetheless still seek a redemptive moment, an affirmation of love from the Black other. This occurs not primarily because they wish to repair any wrongdoing that they have done to this other (although such feelings and motivations may follow in a secondary capacity), but so that they might restore their own image of themselves as a good, honorable, loveable person. This is something which is best done by having such an image confirmed before the Other in a social situation.

THE SOOTHING SCREEN-IMAGE

Let us return to Fanon's commentary on Wolfe's analysis. Fanon highlights Wolfe's remarks on the popularity of reoccurring—and fantasmatically disturbing/alluring—themes within popular culture of the day, such as stories of Black men having sex with white women; white men discovering that they are in fact Black; whites being massacred by Blacks, etc. The

cultural instantiations of white racist masochism evinced here are counterbalanced by the stereotypical emblem of the smiling face of the old, servile, enslaved Black man, as epitomized by the character of Uncle Remus in Harris's novels. The libidinal function of such a figure—of which there are many historical variations, including the figures of Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben that were used in the advertising of US food products—is to effectively assuage and reverse white anxieties caused by the multiple threats posed by Blackness. As Wolfe argues: so long as we can 'package the [Black man's]… grin and market it on a grand scale in our popular culture', so long as whites are 'being titillated by the subtle content of the stereotyped grin', then there is a 'a cloak for this masochism' (Wolfe, cited in Fanon, 1967, p. 176). The white audience is soothed, in other words, by a screen-image. As such, these images clearly had a fetishistic role to play—at least in the sense that they held a type of castration at bay.

If we are in any doubt as the white (racist) cultural need for such a pacifying screen-image, Fanon reiterates the sexual threat posed by colonial stereotypes. The Black man, he says, 'is the incarnation of a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions', 'the keeper of the… gate that opens into the realm of orgies, of bacchanals, of delirious sexual sensations' (Fanon, 1967, p. 177). The juxtaposition between these two caricatured stereotypes of Black masculinity should thus be jarring, marked by a manifest and irresolvable contradiction. What we find instead however is that the transition between the two types of imagery is, somehow, narratively appealing; a libidinal dynamic of sorts plays its part, in mediating this shift.

A more recent example of this libidinal dynamic is to be found in the historical portrayals of Nelson Mandela. In his youth, Mandela was represented as a fiercely uncompromising African Nationalist, an advocate of armed struggle, a committed revolutionary, often depicted as anti-white, a communist, a terrorist. By the time he became president of South Africa, Mandela was represented in a very different way, as the benign father of the nation, as the embodiment of hope and national reconciliation, as, to borrow a phrase from Wolfe, 'Eternally… grinning' (1949, p. 21).

Whereas in Mandela's case, these two types of imagery are separated by a significant historical divide, this is not always the case. If we were to suggest an example from popular culture where both such facets of white fantasies of the Black man are rapidly juxtaposed, it would the character of John Coffey in the book and film versions of Stephen King's 1930's prison drama *The Green Mile* (directed by Frank Darabont). The figure of Coffey (played by Michael Clarke Duncan in the film version), is described as 'a gentle giant of a prisoner… who brings a sense of spirit and humanity to his guards and fellow inmates' in publicity materials for the film. Coffey is a particularly effective example of the deeply lovable, good Black man who stoically endures his suffering and thereby alleviates white fears regards the multiple threats posed by Black masculinity. The huge figure of Coffey—the film constantly reiterates his imposing, muscular physical form, along with his simple-minded nature (he is afraid of the dark)—is initially assumed to be guilty of raping and murdering two white girls, until the white

protagonist, prison officer Paul Edgecomb (played by Tom Hanks) discovers that he is innocent. In fact, not only is Coffey innocent, but he is a kind of spiritual healer, who selflessly absorbs the pain and ailments of others (he has been attempting to heal the two girls who he was accused of killing). By the end of the story Coffey is—predictably enough—executed, despite his innocence, a plot device which adds a further turn of the screw to the masochistic *jouissance* the story evokes. The popularity of King's story presumably had much to do with how the narrative took its audience from a threatening to a non-threatening stereotype of Black masculinity.

We can take a further step here once we consider the Freudian postulate according to which the key to masturbation is not so much the physical act itself but rather the *accompanying fantasy*. There is a self-pleasuring dimension to this ebb and flow between intense masochistic stimulation and the assuaging, pacifying—and much loved—images of the neutralized Black man who, resigned to his fate, has been rendered benevolent and docile ('this gentle, melancholy old slave with his eternal grin' [Fanon, 1967, p. 175, n. 35]). Crude an analogy as this might be—the masochistic enjoyment of racism as effectively masturbatory—it seems nonetheless apt: we have the initial excitation of the fantasmatic image, which is heightened, made painfully arousing, only for this libidinal charge to be relieved in a type of assuaging release, which is itself made possible by the soothing, narcissistically affirming image of the impotent, ever-smiling, ever-faithful Black man or woman. This rhythm of arousal and satiation is proper to fantasy itself, and here we cannot but be reminded of Lacan's notion that fantasy both stages castration and provides a remedy of sorts—a kind of stoppage, reversal, or suspension—of the threatened castration. It is interesting in this respect that Lacan's (2020) illustration of this idea in *Seminar IV*, his reference to a frozen cinema image, a type of screen-memory—which implies stasis, fixedness, unchangeability—is also evident in the fetishistic, iconic imagery of the smiling aged Black man that we are discussing, at least in so far as this figure—as both Fanon and Wolfe emphasize is to again refer to Wolfe's phrase, 'Eternally… grinning' (1949, p. 31). Likewise interesting here is the fact that Lacan offers such remarks in a commentary on Freud's account of beating fantasies, which of course is fundamentally concerned with masochism—and which we turn to in due course—and that he, Lacan, was focused precisely on the *perverse* 'valorization' of such images (Lacan, 2020). It is surely just such an instance of perverse (or fetishistic) valorization of an image that we are concerned with here.

DEFENSIVE IDENTIFICATIONS

While Fanon evidently approves of Wolfe's analysis, he seems to find it incomplete—suspecting, perhaps, that it does not pinpoint a clear psychical mechanism underlying masochism—and he subsequently goes on to offer a series of further elaborations of Wolfe's psychoanalytic thesis. Such folktales, says Fanon, allow the Black man and woman to 'work

off… [their] aggression' (1967, p. 176). This, for Wolfe—interestingly—amounts to a type of sadism, a type of sadistic *jouissance* of which the Black man and woman remain largely unaware. The white man's unconscious 'justifies this aggression', continues Fanon, and 'gives it worth by turning it on himself, thus justifying the classic schema of masochism' (1967, p. 176). While Fanon moves very quickly here—seemingly omitting a series of intermediary steps in his analysis (we could ask: *Why would the white man be willing to take the Black man's aggression onto himself?*)—he is in fact staying close to Freud. In his 'Three Essays on Sexuality', Freud after all argued that 'masochism is nothing more than an extension of sadism turned round upon the subject's self' (1905, p. 158).

It is worth bearing in mind the sublimated and thereby largely unconscious form of what Fanon is describing. The medium of folktales and/or children's literature, is crucial: this is what allows whites to receive Black aggressions—even if in a disguised and severely attenuated form—and for a type of comeuppance to be delivered and masochistically enjoyed. Yet what Fanon is describing also occurs in less sublimated forms, and so further reference to Freud is justified. Freud's account in his 'Three Essays on Sexuality' stresses that any 'person who feels pleasure in producing pain in someone else'—an endemic feature of colonial racism/anti-Blackness—'is also capable of enjoying pleasure in pain' (Freud, 1905, p. 159). So, while we are unsurprised to find that sadism is an active drive component within anti-Blackness, we should likewise be unsurprised to discover that masochism—an inherent and indissociable element of sadism (for Freud, at least)—will invariably be present also. We are thus led to consider that masochism of some sort may be a regular feature within varying forms of racism and anti-Blackness. Nonetheless, Fanon's assertion still begs a question: why does the white man's unconscious 'justify' the Black man's aggression? As if anticipating this question, Fanon (1967) immediately adds a footnote:

> the white man behaves in an offensive manner toward the [Black man because]… he realizes that in the [Black man's] place he would have no mercy on his oppressors. Therefore it is not surprising to see that he identifies himself with the [Black]… white blues and spiritual singers, white authors writing novels in which the [Black man]… proclaims his grievances, whites in blackface. (p. 177)

Once again, we need to step carefully here. Although Fanon's answer to the above question is, implicitly, *identification*—it is only when the white man puts himself in the Black man's place that he realizes that he, the white, is fully deserving of aggression—we need to keep in mind that, psychoanalytically, there are multiple types of identification. What is in question is not a 'sympathetic' identification, an identification based on a sense of affinity, or a basic emotional tie, but rather, so it would seem, a tacit and under-acknowledged awareness that should I, the white, be put in such a position of subjugation, I would wish furious revenge on my oppressors.

What Fanon points to, as an initial factor then, is more a moment of conscious realization ('he realizes that in the [Black man's] place'). This is a transitory and at best provisional

identification *with the situation of the other*. At the risk of repetition, for Freud (1921), such an identification implies no affectionate bond, no necessary perception of likeness or similarity, and works perfectly well under conditions of hate, resentment, or aggression. Behaviors such as proclaiming the grievances of the Black man, adopting Black musical genres, etc., seem to be essentially *defenses*. Such identifications remain fundamentally narcissistic. An interesting implication of Fanon's analysis is that there is—perhaps contrary to expectation—nothing inherently progressive in whites making identifications with Black culture or Black suffering (his inclusion of 'whites in blackface' [1967, p. 177] alongside other instantiations of white identification with Blackness drives this point home). Identifications of this sort can be a self-protective or narcissistic gesture, motivated more by fear and self-preservation rather than by anything approximating empathy—an instance, we might say, of *Black Masks, White Skin*.

It would, surely, be going too far to maintain that all white identifications with Blackness work in a predominantly self-protective or narcissistic way. Then again, given the racist conditions under which 'The white man is sealed in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness' (Fanon, 1967, p. 9), the presumption would have to be that in colonial contexts, the majority do. Yet, given the complex and intimate nature of unconscious identifications between white and Black remain an abiding concern of Fanon's throughout *Black Skin White Masks*, we should be careful not to be reductive or too quickly dismissive in how we treat this topic. Despite the Manichean social structuring of the colonial world, which implies mutually exclusive categories of identification, there is a sense in which whiteness and blackness are irreducibly enmeshed, inextricably entangled in one another, even if this inextricability remains consciously disavowed (certainly so for the white/colonizer), and as such often most dynamically alive at the level of the unconscious. We may take up the psychoanalytic implications of this point as follows: a paradoxical condition for narcissism in the colony (as elsewhere), is *a type of differentiating reliance on the figure of the other*. This is, of course, one of the points Fanon can be said to be making in his adaptation of Lacan's mirror stage ('the…Other for the white man is and will continue to the black man. And conversely' [1967, p. 161]).

Why then have I spent so much time focusing on 'cross-racial' identifications given that this was a focus of many early psychoanalytic/postcolonial engagements with Fanon? Well, firstly, I wanted to take the opportunity to push back against a commonplace assumption of many psychological accounts which assume that racism and 'cross-racial' identifications are mutually exclusive. By contrast, the possibility of identifying with some aspect of other (be it their place or situation, or some signifier or trait associated with them) is an immanent possibility. This is the case even if such processes of identification involve aggressive forms of counter-identification. Counter-identification, after all, can be said to occur in the context of an initial earlier (if unconscious) identification (the force of the counter-identification being typically proportionate to the initial identification).

If one of Fanon's achievements is to highlight the sexual dimension—the libidinal economy—of colonial racism, then he is likewise to be credited with grasping also the intensities and complexities of cross-racial identifications and their related instances of aggressive counter-identification. For some readers of Fanon this might seem unnecessary to reiterate, and yet I would suggest that this is a timely reminder. Why so? Well, while it may be useful to push back against once popular postcolonial notions of 'ambivalent identification' (Bhabha, 1994)—which surely under-estimate the sheer force of aggressive counter-identifications and of anti-Blackness as such—it is also the case that accounts which prioritize anti-Blackness risk losing sight of this crucial psychoanalytic dimension of racism (i.e., that it involves various instances of cross-racial identification). To insist that anti-Blackness situates outside the parameters of the human—as is the case for Afro-pessimist thought—seems to imply that Blackness is beyond the parameters of identification, which in a Fanonian analysis, is not, I think, the case.

VICISSITUDES OF MASOCHISM

Let us return now to our close reading of relevant sections of *Black Skin White Masks*. This, for Fanon, is the basic sequence of psychical maneuvers made by whiteness within circumstances of coloniality/anti-Blackness for Fanon: an unacknowledged identification with the figure of the enslaved/denigrated Black man delivers a moment of anxiety (in the form of a fear of reprisal); this anxiety is alleviated, *gratified* by a degree of punishment and humiliation, which, while temporarily assuaging the anxiety, also, in turn, fortifies *the need for a further aggressive response*. A circular pattern is thereby set in place. This helps explain why a further speculation, which Fanon (1967) presents as '[a]nother solution', might be said to supplement the explanation he has already offered:

> There is… a sadistic aggression toward the Black man, followed by a guilt complex because of the sanction against such behavior by the democratic culture of the country in question. This aggression is then tolerated by the [Black man]: whence masochism. (pp. 177–178)

So, having offered an explanation prioritizing *the aggression of the Black man* and the masochism of the white (which eventually gives way to a sadistic reprisal), Fanon now prioritizes *the sadism of the white man*. Initially, the interconnecting term here between white sadism and white masochism seems not immediately apparent. Reading this section slowly reveals, however, that the interconnecting term is there: what is different in this second or supplementary account is the role of guilt ('a guilt complex').

Having offered this additional perspective on the masochism of racism, Fanon imagines an interlocuter objecting to this explanation on the basis that it 'does not contain the elements of classic masochism' (1967, p. 178). This might seem a little odd, because although what

Fanon is describing fits better with Freud's (1924) account of *moral* masochism (as in 'The Economic Problem of Masochism')—which differs from the description in 'The Three Essays on Sexuality'—his model remains largely Freudian (certainly so in view of the reversible relation between sadism and masochism). Yet Fanon's subsequent remark is worth bearing in mind: 'this situation is not classic… [yet] it is the only way in which to explain the masochistic behavior of the white man' (1967, p. 178). We might suggest that for a decolonial psychoanalysis, one major category of masochism would need to be: *racial masochism* (in addition to the standard list [primary, secondary, erotogenic, feminine, moral, etc.]). Such a form of masochism would be a consistent—if repressed, disavowed—structural feature of racism/anti-Blackness as such, certainly so given that it would be the corollary of a more readily recognizable sadistic nature of racism/anti-Blackness.

Interestingly, to add a Lacanian twist, this particular form of masochism—the moral masochism of being racially/sexually humiliated ('cucked')—occurs not merely at the psychological (egoic/imaginary) level. It needs to be grasped also in relation to processes of symbolic identification, and, in relation to an aligned set of symbolic-legal operations. To put this in more Freudian terms, we could say that racial masochism plays its part in affirming and substantiating *group identifications* (in clarifying, consolidating, separating identity categories). In addition to sharpening demarcations and differentiations between categories of subject, it is also—utilizing more explicitly Lacanian terms—a factor in separating between the different orders (or different 'rights') of enjoyment, or, perhaps more significantly, between the prohibited forms of enjoyment pertaining to such categories of subject. It becomes, moreover, a potent basis for laws, for legal recrimination, for categories of censure and discrimination and so on. Racial masochism, in short, has a role to play in maintaining and extending a societal order, a network of laws and values. *This is a form of masochism that is inseparable from racial/colonial symbolic identity as such.*

We have then the basis of a Lacanian conceptualization of what Fanon sets in place with his provisional analysis of the masochistic *jouissance* of white racism: an account of racial/racist masochism as *a social link*, that is, as an anchoring mode of symbolic identification in colonial/anti-Black contexts. Such *jouissance* effects cannot, in other words, be dismissed as merely idiosyncratic or 'psychological' just as they cannot be qualified as simply aberrant, unrepresentative, as little more than the unsavory enjoyments of a handful of perverse racial fantasists. They are not, in short, peripheral to structures of racism/coloniality; rather, they play a foundational role, to draw on Frank Wilderson's (2020) terms of analysis, in *securing an order of life*, this order being that of anti-Blackness itself.

'[I]T IS THE WOMAN WHO RAPES HERSELF'

Fanon now announces that he will propose an explanation for the fantasy *a Black man is raping me*. This is curious insofar as this theme is broached as if he were entering into a different topic of investigation (female sexuality) when it is evidently a continuation of his exploration of masochism in white racism. His somewhat abrupt change of course can be read as an avoidance of the implication posed by his own argument, namely that the idea of sexual congress with—or rape at the hands of—a Black man *might also play a role in the unconscious fantasy of white men.*

Fanon's sampling of ideas from Helene Deutsche and Marie Bonaparte seems less than compelling, although it does serve to highlight the questions of feminine aggression in relation to sexuality and infantile fantasy. Then comes Fanon's own speculative explanation (clearly influenced by Freud's [1919] 'A child is being beaten'):

> First the little girl sees a sibling rival beaten by the father, a libidinal aggressive. At this stage…
> the father, who is now the pole of her libido, refuses to take up the aggression that the little
> girl's unconscious demands of him… [Because] this free-floating aggression requires an
> investment… [and] the girl is at the age in which the child begins to enter folklore and… culture…
> the [Black man] becomes the predestined depository of this aggression. (Fanon, 1967, p. 179)

Thus far, Fanon is still on relatively safe ground. To contend that the figure of the Black man is heavily freighted with (racist) fantasy, and that this figure of intense fantasmatic investments is the destination ('predestined depository') of transferred forms of aggression, is uncontroversial, indeed, seemingly undeniable, in contexts of anti-Blackness. It is with the next step that Fanon (1967) takes, 'into the labyrinth', as he puts it, that he risks courting opprobrium: 'when a woman lives the fantasy of rape… it is in some way the fulfillment of… an inner wish' (p. 179).

Fanon is right to stress the danger inherent in what he is thinking through: to broach this topic is, typically, to say more about heterosexist male fantasies *about women* than the sexual fantasies of women. It risks ventriloquizing misogynistic presumptions about women. Nevertheless, if we trust Fanon's intuition, and if we remain on the level of psychoanalytic speculation focused on the task of exploring the unconscious speculation offered, moreover, in respect of the *pathological scene that is the colonial situation*, then his remarks are perhaps less controversial than they might at first appear.

Several factors are worth bearing in mind here. Firstly, there is nothing particularly alarming, from a psychoanalytic perspective, about the idea that fears are the inverted—or acceptable, expressible—form of repressed wishes. Secondly, to identify a prospective kernel of repressed sexual fantasy in an analysand is decidedly *not* to imply that they secretly desire for this to happen. The idea is precisely the opposite: the repressed unconscious fantasy is repressed for a reason; it needs to be kept at a distance, it needs, effectively, *not* to exist (recall Fanon's earlier qualification, that he will not attribute 'any reality' [p. 178] to the

fantasy he is discussing). If a truly repressed fantasy were to be brought into reality, if, indeed, the fantasizing subject were to be suddenly confronted with the real possibility of such a fantasized act being enacted, then this would constitute a traumatic event.

With these qualifications in place, we might let Fanon's assertion (regards the fantasy 'a Black man is raping me') resonate for a while such that we can hear in it a variation of his thesis in respect of the masochistic dimension of white racism. At basis, his argument, as questionable at points as it might be, is that 'it is the [white] woman who rapes herself' (Fanon, 1967, p. 197). She does so, moreover, via the transferential means of the fantasmatic figure (the imago) of the Black man, an imago that embodies all imaginable aggressive tendencies. The masochistic form of this fantasy is thus a passive voice variation, a reversal, of the sadistic drive to eviscerate a woman. Hence the unspoken injunction that Fanon attributes to the white woman in respect of the Black man: 'Hurt me as I would hurt me if I were in your place' (1967, p. 179).

While Fanon has found it necessary to switch between genders before making this assertion, we can suggest—perhaps beyond Fanon's intention—that this formula might hold also for the white colonial male/heterosexist standpoint such that we have the following: *it is the white man who rapes himself via the imago of the Black man*. Or, to move a little more slowly through the sequence of fantasmatic substitutions: a masochistic scene, such as 'I am beaten or abused by the Black man', is itself a variation on the sadistic impulse, 'I want to beat or abuse the Black man' (i.e., 'Hurt me as I would hurt me if I were in your place'). This returns us to the idea that a sequence of scene might be involved here.

This shifting from active to passive voices of the drive (i.e., from sadistic to masochistic scene) seems, at first glance, not to make sense. There is no shortage, after all, of instances of sadistic racism, so why would such a sadistic impulse need to be concealed behind a masochistic scene? Well, if we add back the crucial signifier that has been omitted (or repressed) from this sequence—namely, reference to rape, sexual subordination—then this becomes a lot more cogent, especially so within homophobic contexts of anti-Blackness: 'I am beaten or abused (*or raped*) by the Black man', is itself a variation on the sadistic impulse, 'I want to beat or abuse (*or rape*) the Black man'.

This sexual/desiring dimension of (white, colonial) masculine masochism is what Fanon elides in his abrupt turn to conceptualizations of female sexuality, and there are two facets of this topic that need to be underscored. The first concerns the prospect of being 'feminized', or—bearing in mind the problematic nature of such historical and psychoanalytic gender-role assumptions—being put in something akin to a woman's (or 'feminine') position relative to a domineering male. The second concerns the possibility of sexual desire for the Black man. With this in mind, we might appreciate how, for white, racist heterosexist masculinity, even the disturbing masochistic scene (in which one is violently attacked by a Black man) might be preferable to one in which there is sexual contact or rape, and how a masochistic scene of

being raped by the Black man would be preferable to the realization of active desire for the Black man. The defensive operation here is the use of a fear or phobia, a nightmarish scenario, to hide a suppressed wish, a repressed desire.

This discussion, prompted by a symptomatic shift in Fanon's argument, alerts us to something crucial: the most troubling of all colonial sexual scenes is not—*or not only*—that *of the Black man having sex with the white woman*. It is rather—*or in addition*—that of *the Black man having sex with—dominating, subordinating*, 'feminizing'—*the white man*. None of this is to underestimate the libidinal and discursive force of the fantasmatic scene of the Black man and the white woman. Sexton (2002) speaks of the possibility of the white woman's sexual pursuit of the Black man as 'dreadful and unspeakable within racist culture' (p. 209). To clarify this issue, it helps to draw a distinction between *fear* and *repression*. The Black man having sex with the white woman is still the most *feared* (and *enjoyed*) of all colonial scenes, with fear here connoting the implications of fascination, allure, and repressed desire (as Fanon [1967] intimates in his reference to the notion of the 'phobogenic' object which 'must arouse' even as it entails 'both fear and revulsion' [p. 154]). Fear, obviously enough, is a conscious state, a state, which—as in the case of a phobia—designates a specific object or a situation. Hence, we have a scene that the white man has not—to use one of Fanon's terms—'unconsciousnessized'.

In this sense, the desiring sexual scene between the Black man and the white man is not feared simply because it is fundamentally *repressed*. The former sexual scene cannot easily *be spoken*, which means that it *can* be imagined, pictured, revisited, so much so in fact, that it becomes a properly fantasmatic preoccupation. The latter, by contrast, cannot readily be imagined or pictured, let alone verbally expressed. This is the difference between a fantasy that can be obliquely approached, put into words—if with some difficulty—and relayed to another, on the one hand, and a properly unconscious, which is to say *repressed ph*antasy, which an analysand will not be able to access or put into words, which, indeed, effectively *does not exist* and that can only be 'retrieved' via the analyst's work of construction.

Within the terms of Freud's (1919) 'A child is being beaten', this is the difference between the first in a sequence of beating fantasies, something that can be consciously considered, summoned into awareness ('My father is beating a child'), and a subsequent fantasy (' I am being beaten by my father') which, in Freud's words, has 'never had a real existence… [is] never remembered… [has] never succeeded in becoming conscious' (Freud, 1919, p. 185). Improvising on Freud's account of a changing sequence of fantasy scenes we can suggest that what we find, if we 'roll back the film' from a scene in which a Black man is beating a white woman (as I, the white male, watch on), is a scene in which *the Black man is beating me.*

PROBLEMATIZATIONS

Before concluding, we should respond to several foreseeable objections. Why, for a start, has more not been said about the Black woman in the above analysis? Why, moreover, has the rape of woman of color by white men, a regularly occurring event in the colonial world, not featured in a more central capacity (Doane, 1991; Vergès 1997)? Secondly—moving on now to a more conceptual objection—is the above discussion not limited in its apparent reliance on a primal sexual scene? Surely the possibilities of racial/racist fantasy are far more extensive than just this? Is it not reductive to rely on a single primal scene as a means of exploring something as complex, as flexible, and shifting as fantasy? We presumably need a more flexible conceptualization in respect of the multiple subject-positions and modalities of desire on offer.

The easiest way to begin responding to these questions is to consult Luz Calvo's (2008) engagement in similar debates. For Calvo, who likewise utilizes the concept of a primal scene in her discussion of Fanon's 'a Black man is raping me' fantasy (albeit to designate the historical fear of miscegenation rather than as site of masochistic *jouissance*), the erasure of woman of color in Fanon's fantasy is a significant issue. Calvo refers to Mary Ann Doane's (1991) *Dark Continents: Epistemologies of Racial and Sexual Difference* to assert that Fanon does neglect the historical status of the white rape of Black women in choosing to highlight the white woman's fantasy. Intriguingly though, the critical charge that follows—the claim that in Fanon's analysis 'rape undergoes a displacement… from the white man's prerogative… to the white woman's fears/desire in the relation to the black man' (Doane, 1991, p. 222)— seems also to contain a viable response to the charge at hand. How so? Well, it is true that Fanon's account does not foreground the rape of Black women by white men. Yet it is also, crucially, the case that the scene he focusses on can be viewed as a *matrix* of colonial relations, one which permits various substitutions and displacements, one which operates— like Freud's sequence of beating fantasies—to conceal and replace other scenes to which it is related.

To approach the given primal scene in the way Freud approaches beating fantasies is already to presume that a more crucial scene has been subtracted from a sequence; whether this is due to psychic repression or socio-historical/ideological suppression (or both), we can be sure that a scene will have 'fallen out', and that what remains will always be in some ways a displacement of what has been extracted. So, if we bear in mind that the scene that Fanon focusses on is not singular, but is instead *one in a series*, one, moreover, that *affords multiple permutations*, then it necessarily bears the traces of other repressed scenes. We have already seen evidence of this: behind the heterosexual scene that Fanon highlights there is another— the homosexual masochistic scene—that he chooses not to speak of. It helps to bear in mind here the Lacanian idea that a fantasy is not encapsulated in a single narrative or one imagined scenario but rather comprises a series of logical relations. Calvo (2008) makes a similar point:

> The erasure of the woman of color (and… white men) in the fantasy ['a Black man is raping me]… produces and is produced by the reversal of the sexual and racial trauma that is colonialism. The traumatic event—the rape of the woman of color by the slave owner/colonizer—is repressed only to return through a reversal: the fantasy of a white woman being raped by the native… Through 'deferred action' the historical event resurfaces in inverted form. (p. 67)

Having offered something of a response to how the rape of Black woman is nonetheless present—if in a displaced, reversed, or perhaps unintentional form—in Fanon's account, we can now, via Calvo, respond to the objection that such a fixed scene (a 'frozen tableau') is a limiting or reductive way of conceptualizing fantasy:

> The fantasy [a Black man is raping me]… like all fantasies of this type—is open to various permutations. For the white woman, the fantasy may represent her desire to be loved/raped by the white man (who, instead, loves/rapes the black woman)… the fantasy could be the projection of the white man's desire to be raped by the black man… As a fantasy, ['a Black is raping me'] has a structure and a syntax, yet its positions are multiple and its identifications mobile… Any particular subject's relationship to the fantasy will be structured by both their personal history and social location. What we might surmise… is that this public fantasy has gained currency, precisely because it is able to respond to diverse sets of private desires and social locations. (Calvo, 2008, p. 67)

Calvo's remarks are a pertinent reminder of the clinical imperative to bear in mind the singularity, the idiosyncratic distinctiveness of an individual subject's fantasy, which cannot summarily be reduced to a presumed social fantasy. To extract a generic form from the historical contingencies and particularities of a given subject's life is, for many clinicians, to risk losing the fabric of the fantasy; it is to reduce fantasy to a narrative (i.e., a type of secondary revision). Of course, we may contest this; Freud's schema of beating fantasies seems to provide a means of avoiding the reduction of fantasy to a single scene of desire, to a single enactment, to a simple narrative. The complexity of Freud's model—which as we have now seen, involves a sequence of scenes and the possibility of numerous permutations, displacements, and repressions—means that it is not—to revisit the objection voiced above—static, one-dimensional or, arguably, reductive. In an application of Freud's schema to think through various facets of racist fantasy, Loren Dent (2023) maintains that in Freud's model 'fantasy is supple; a series of permutations and substitutions are possible in unfolding the sequence of witnessing, unconscious (masochistic) fantasy, and conscious (sadistic) fantasy'.

This tension between individual as opposed to social forms of fantasy, is, of course, a variation of the ontogeny or sociogeny question that Fanon so famously weighs in on, stressing the often overriding influence of the latter. While it is worth briefly noting that Fanon does not, perhaps contrary to certain depictions of his work, simply forego ontogeny in favor of sociogeny—even a brief perusal of the summary case studies included in *The Wretched of the Earth* demonstrates Fanon's attention to individual factors—he importantly does issue a corrective to the de-politicizing psychical reductionism of many psychoanalytic thinkers. This corrective underlies Calvo's careful qualification that a given public fantasy

exists because 'it is able to respond to diverse sets of private desires and social locations' (2008, p. 67). This point can also be made in more forthright Fanonian terms. Racist fantasy structures (the phobogenic imago of the Black man, the various productions of the European collective unconscious) are, in many respects, over-determining; they flow into and populate the material of individual fantasies.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

We have covered a good deal of ground, even if, perhaps inevitably, there are a few remaining loose threads. There is, however, one last question that deserves our attention before moving on. We observed earlier, via Fanon, that something akin to a wish for revenge might be sparked in the white subject by virtue of a transitory identification with a Black man or woman ('he [the white man] recognizes that in [the Black man's] place he would have no mercy on his oppressors')? To whom is this drive for revenge directed? As we have seen, there are at least two answers to this question for Fanon. Firstly, this aggression is often directed back at the Black man himself (who is guilty, so we might put it, for the fact that the white man momentarily recognized himself in this [the Black man's] position). This helps us to stress a more socio-political point: the ideological value of scenes of white inferiority and humiliation is that they permit a vituperative response, one in which the avenging white subject needs feel no guilt whatsoever for exercising a violent reaction. The more there is a staging of humiliation, the more the violence of anti-Blackness is made moral, and is infused with a super-egoic injunction of what is Right.

Fanon's second answer to this question is, of course, that such a wish for revenge is converted into a masochistic need for punishment *from the Black man*. Yet might we not identify another target of this superegoic wish for retribution? It can, surely, be directed at other whites. This would provide one way of interpreting what has been referred to the aggressiveness (or 'predatory' aspect) of white antiracism. Badenhorst (2021), for example, speaks of how 'White-on-Black identity violence often comes to be displaced into White-on-White identity violence' (p. 296) via multiple defensive justifications and projections. I would add to Badenhorst's account that such potential re-directions of the wish for revenge characterizes not only the impetus of some progressive/liberal or 'woke' attacks on whites deemed less than progressive; it likewise features as a factor when such 'less progressive' whites—no less aggressively—lambast their progressive white counterparts in turn.

It is also the case that such gratifying humiliations of white racial masochism occur in a selective way, in a domain that is cordoned off, limited to a discrete facet of psychical or socio-political life, such that broader structures of oppression can continue apace. This is not dissimilar to situations in which relations of sexual masochism and submissiveness are privately enjoyed by persons who are otherwise dominant and powerful in other facets of

their lives. The masochism of white racism can thus take on a markedly fetishistic quality, operating via disavowal: 'I know anti-Blackness is a pervasive structure, but there is a sphere of psychical life in which I am thoroughly debased, shown up as inferior, and so, on this basis, I also can dismiss anti-Blackness as a pervasive structure'.

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PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Knotting the psyche: White fantasy and racial violence

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ABSTRACT

This article engages core Lacanian concepts to read racial whiteness in relation to the three registers of the psyche. It deploys Lacan's concept of suture to argue that whiteness stitches together the registers of the psyche, joining the Imaginary and Symbolic as a mask over the Real. This masking of the Real privileges the function of fantasy, such that the Real of the white subject's lack is veiled by racial discourses of the Symbolic that articulate Imaginary fantasies of wholeness. Through analysis of the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown, a reading of creativity in African American culture, and an interpretation of Toni Morrison's novel *Paradise*, the article argues that white fantasies of wholeness threaten an unsuturing of the psyches of black subjects. It turns to Lacan's work on the sinthome to suggest how black subjects knot the registers of the psyche in ways that protect against the traumas that assail them in acts of racism and racial violence.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of racial whiteness has not received sufficient attention in Lacanian theoretical investigations. In the year 2000, Kalpana Seshadri-Crook's groundbreaking study, *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race*, emphatically established whiteness as a master signifier, a signifier without a signified that determines the interpretative semiotic field that structures race. Perhaps due to the success of this theorizing, very little has since been written by Lacanians on whiteness. (Though whiteness has not been a direct focus of the theory, engaging recent work has been produced by George and Hook [2021] on race, Marriott [2021] on blackness, and McGowan [2022] on race and fantasy.) In this article, while paying close attention to historical and literary instantiations of race and racism, I seek to reconceptualize whiteness within the frame of a set of key Lacanian concepts. My conceptualization moves

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past a focus on whiteness as a signifier by bridging Jacque Lacan's early thinking on the tripartite structure of the psyche with his culminating work on the sinthome as a fourth element capable of knotting the constitutive registers of the fragmented psyche.

My aim is to facilitate an understanding of whiteness as not only a master signifier that structures what Lacan calls the Symbolic, or the linguistic world of meaning, but more expansively as a concept inflecting all three registers of the psyche: the Symbolic, the Real, and the Imaginary. Racial whiteness is generated in the Symbolic but grounded in fantasy; it thus establishes a relation to the Imaginary that echoes through the Symbolic and aims to silence the Real. I show that the fantasy of whiteness both blinds white subjects to this Real that structures their psychic existence and reshapes the reality of our lived world to fit the fantasies of white subjects. Whiteness, I suggest, first sutures, or stitches together, the fragmented psyche of the white subject and then knits the fantasies of that psyche into the very fabric of our lived realities. My proposal is that this suturing of whiteness roots forms of violence both physical and psychic that threaten an unsuturing of racial blackness. I shall turn to Lacan's concept of the sinthome to highlight ways that African American and other black subjects seek to reknot the black psyche that is threatened by whiteness with the catastrophic prospect of its potential unsuturing.

WHITE VIOLENCE AND THE DEMONIC, BLACK IMAGO

The power of whiteness lies in its ability to name and define reality. In order to explore the relation between white fantasy and the reality it insistently dictates, I want to start by referencing a case of police shooting that engrossed the United States of America. This case both displays the violent, destructive power of fantasy and suggests fantasy's enveloping role in the structuring of the psyche as racialized and white. On August 9, 2014, an 18-year-old black teenager named Michael Brown was shot and killed by police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. Protestors of this shooting came to use the slogan 'Hands up, Don't shoot' because witnesses assert that Brown was shot by Wilson while his hands were up in surrender. After being stopped by Wilson because he seemed, in Wilson's view, to match a suspect police were in search of, Brown is shot six times by Wilson. During a grand jury trial, Wilson gave testimony that displays the unstable relation black bodies hold to reality when reconstructed by the white psyche.

Wilson testified that Brown assaulted him from outside the window of his police vehicle after Wilson tried to stop Brown and a companion as they walked past the vehicle. During the encounter, Wilson fires shots from inside his car, and in his testimony, he describes Brown's appearance during the altercation. According to Wilson, Brown grabbed him from outside the car, and as Brown pointed the gun away from himself, Wilson says: 'he had the most intense aggressive face. The only way I can describe it, it looks like a demon, that's how angry he

looked' (Cave, 2014, p. 225). Wilson's depiction of a demonic Brown slides toward fantasy and soon transforms Wilson's own self-image. Wilson continues, 'I tried to hold his right arm… And when I grabbed him, the only way I can describe it is I felt like a five-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan… that's just how big he felt and how small I felt just from grasping his arm' (p. 212).

We can begin to speculate here, from a Lacanian perspective, about the fantasy of regression that reduces Wilson to infancy. Wilson imagines himself as a five-year-old, but his fantasies recall the life-long struggle over the inadequacies of the body that are initiated for the subject at the moment of Lacan's (2006c) famous Mirror Stage. The child in the mirror lacks motor control, and his psychic apprehension of this lack fuels the formation of fantasies that, Lacan explains, take shape in images or 'imagos of the fragmented body' (Lacan, 2006a, p. 85). These fantasy imagos include castration, emasculation, mutilation, and dismemberment, and they can be seen as 'matrices' within which an individual instance of violence to the body may be situated; significantly, Lacan argues that 'variations of the matrices' emerge through 'other specific images' (p. 85). I suggest that, over the course of the history of American race relations, the black body has been subjected to repeated scenes of violence that make blackness an elective inflexion of the matrical imagos of the body in pieces. Through brutal practices of violence that range from lynchings to the more-recently publicized media images of black Americans graphically killed in police violence, the black body has come to reify the imagos and the psychic apprehension of a fragmented self that plague the human subject. This fragmentation is insistently denied by all subjects and, in a Symbolic that valorizes whiteness, it is cast unto the black body not only through destructive acts like the one committed by Wilson but also through the discursive and visual availability of scenes of black death, scenes that, even when used to resist this brutality, reinforce a coalescing of racial blackness and death with the imagos that drive our violent predilections.

Lacan (2006a) counts demons among the 'aggressive images that torment mankind' (p. 85) across time, and he notes that our aggressive response in our lived worlds to our imagined tormentors has been our 'cruel refinement of the weapons' (p. 86) we aim at the other. Whether Wilson psychically struggles in the moment of the encounter with the demonic images he pins to Brown or whether he later fabricates these images in expectation of their natural believability to the court, Wilson's fantasies justify the excessive violence he brings to the encounter. Wilson explains that, after getting out of the car, 'I shoot a series of shots. I don't know how many I shot, I just know I shot it… but I know I hit him at least once because I saw his body kind of jerk or flinched' (Cave, 2014, p. 228). This jerking body is granted inhuman animacy in Wilson's explaining. Wilson states,

> I remember seeing the smoke from the gun and I kind of looked at him and he's still coming at me, he hadn't slowed down… At this point it looked like he was almost bulking up to run through the shots, like it was making him mad that I'm shooting at him. And the face that he had was

looking straight through me, like I wasn't even there, I wasn't even anything in his way. (Cave, 2014, p. 228)

In this testimony, a black teenage boy attains the fantastical ability to transform a trained police officer into a five-year-old little boy, and, simultaneously, Michael Brown, the actual teenager in the incident, not only becomes the wrestler Hulk Hogan but takes on the qualities of Marvel Comics' the Hulk. He becomes stronger and more aggressive as he gets angrier, and he bulks up to run through bullets. Additionally, because his aggression is not only monstrous but demonic, his face, finally, cannot be looked at by Wilson until it is made blank and he lies face down on the ground; Wilson concludes:

I'm backing up pretty rapidly, I'm backpedaling pretty good because I know if he reaches me, he'll kill me. His hand was in a fist at his side… And… I remember looking at my sites and firing, all I see is his head and that's what I shot. I don't know how many, I know at least once because I saw the last one go into him. And then when it went into him, the demeanor on his face went blank, the aggression was gone, it was gone, I mean, I knew he stopped, the threat was stopped. When he fell, he fell on his face. (Cave, 2014, p. 229)

Here Brown's life as well as his identity is violently eviscerated. He is made faceless even before he dies, an empty, blank canvas painted upon with the fearsome fantasies of a white officer who first sees a monster and a demon and then exenterates from his own recognition, and also from the reality around him, the singular life of Michael Brown. Frantz Fanon, the black Martinican psychiatrist, has noted that the 'black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man' (Fanon, 1967, p. 83). Fanon's statement and his theoretical turn to psychoanalysis highlight the—still undervalued—potential for psychoanalysis to account for the deep-rooted mechanisms of fantasy that shape racial reality. Such an accounting, I suggest, entails engagement with and modification of standard psychoanalytic conceptualizations of subjectivity to account for the racialization of subjectivity in our present society. To explain the imposition of this fatal white fantasy unto the decimated reality of the black subject, I want to turn to Lacan's theorizing of discourse and its relation to psychic structure within the human subject. What I argue is that the constitution of a white racial identity involves a process of what Lacan refers to as suturing, a process that remakes both the racialized psyche and the reality it occupies.

THE SUTURING OF WHITENESS

Lacan's one-time student, Jacques-Alain Miller (1977), describes suture as 'the most elementary articulation of the subject's relation to the signifying chain' (p. 32). Suture, we may say, entails the subject's entry into that chain, into the social world of meaning that Lacan calls the Symbolic. This entry is bound to fantasy. Most precisely, suture involves, to quote Miller again, the subject's 'exclusion from the discourse which internally it intimates' (p. 32).

What we have in suture, then, is the subject's entry into discourse through the exclusion of what Lacan may call its own truth, the internal lack that discourse and language simultaneously generate and mask. Lacan (1998) himself elaborates on suture in Seminar 11 as 'a conjunction of the imaginary and the symbolic' (p. 118). This Imaginary is precisely the place of fantasy, the psychic register that plagues the subject with fantasies of an impossible wholeness and nightmares of an intolerable psychic reality of fragmentation.

The Imaginary, which Lacan ties to the mirror stage and its fantasies of the fragmented body, urges a remaking of the subjective self. Lacan (1998) reads the self and its making as 'taken up… in a dialectic, that sort of temporal progress that is called haste, thrust, forward movement' (p. 118). This is the type of temporal haste that Lacan (2006b) describes in his reading of 'logical time', where the subject embraces the 'future anterior', the identity that he will have always been in the past if he hastily grasps at the self that now unfolds in front of him. What I suggest is that whiteness is an identity that brings subjects into their referential position within the chain of signifiers that make up the Symbolic world of meaning; and it does so through the haste of a fantasy that retroactively defines the subject as having always been white, white down to the core of their Imagined being.

Figure 1. *The Three Registers of the Psyche*
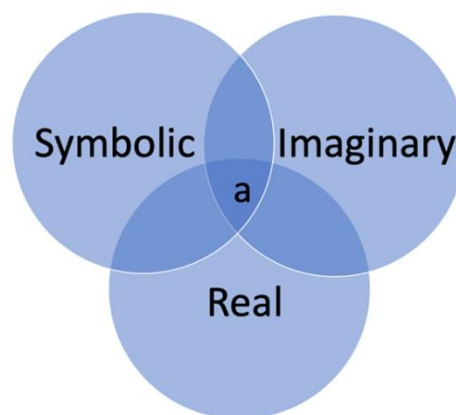
Fantasy allows for the subject's hasty response to the very fracturing of the human psyche that grants subjects subjectivity. Lacan describes the human psyche as comprised of three registers (Figure 1): the Symbolic, or the world of language that allows access to meaning and subjectivity; the Imaginary, which supplies the subject with fantasies of its unified wholeness while also assailing the subject with nightmares of the dissolution of such wholeness; and the Real, the psychic zone of lack that is occupied by all that escapes language. If suture marks a conjunction of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, this is because it designates a stitching of the fantasies of the Imaginary into the discourses of the Symbolic.

Figure 2. *Suturing of the Symbolic and Imaginary Over the Real*
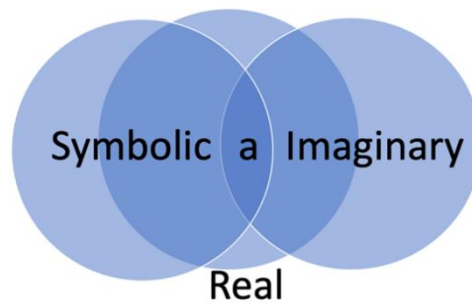
Whiteness, as an identity retroactively constituted by discourse, is a preeminent example of this process of suturing. Whiteness relies upon the object *a*, or the fantasy object that is the trans-subjective essence of all white people, the fantasy racial core that unifies both the white Symbolic and the white psyche that structures this Symbolic. In the diagram above, it is the *a*, as the element of fantasy, that makes possible the suturing of subjectivity (Figure 2). What the intransigence of race and racism has meant for whiteness is that white Imaginary fantasies of wholeness can be reinforced by the racist discourses of the Symbolic in such a way as to mask the Real lack of white subjects. The Imaginary and the Symbolic are sutured over the Real to make manifest in the Symbolic whiteness's Imaginary fantasies of wholeness.

However, driven by the Imaginary, this suturing is also plagued by fantasies of the dissolution of wholeness. The child of the mirror is driven by its motor incapacities, which fragment the ego it constitutes as a gestalt that is discrete, unified, and whole. The fragmented subject perceives a split from the unified reality it projects into the mirror, and the suturing of the racial subject is, as such, plagued by fears of an Imaginary other, a mirror-self who is stronger than me, who infantilizes me with his superior, hulking strength. Though blackness, in white fantasy, has historically marked an inferior, inhuman, animalism, it simultaneously evokes a vitality and exuberance that belies the superiority of whiteness (whether this vitality is tied to fantasies of black brutality, black sexuality, black athleticism, or simply black enjoyment); and the violence that ensues from white fantasies of race has only compounded outraged refutations of the ostensive superiority, or even mere humane sensitivity, of the exalted white race. What I see happening in our historical moment is a dissolution of the fantasies of white wholeness and white supremacy, or at least direct challenges to them; and the result of these challenges is violence at the hands of fearful whites.

The ability Wilson demonstrates to transform blackness into facelessness is a prerogative of whiteness; and it usefully contextualizes our current political moment, a time of increasing white chauvinism in which members of the American Republican party have insisted on the right to mark-out an alternative version of reality through assertion of what former Counselor

to President Donald Trump, Kellyanne Conway, has called 'Alternative facts' (Meet The Press, 2017). This imperative of Trump followers to redefine the reality of our social Symbolic began in the wake of the first American presidency by a black man, Barack Obama. That presidency—lasting for a full eight years—threatened to move blackness out of the frame of white fantasy, unsettling the imagos culturally aligned with blackness and potentially forcing America's reckoning with an embodied blackness, in Obama himself, that defied stereotypes of insufficiency, criminality, and inferiority. Trump's own Birtherism fueled attacks on Obama's identity that attempted to void any altered representations of blackness. What was at stake was not simply images of blackness but a fragmenting of the unifying, ascendent concept of whiteness itself; significantly, Obama's rise coincided with pointed news reports of America's radical demographic shift, as the country arrived at the inevitable moment when more babies of color were being born than white babies (Cohn, 2016).

Lacan's theory helps us understand something of the Imaginary fantasies and Symbolic discourses operative in our current historical moment. In Seminar 17, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan presents his theory of the four discourses. He discusses what he calls the master's discourse, the university discourse, the hysteric's discourse, and the analyst's discourse. The master's discourse, which is charted below, aligns with the discursive function of whiteness as I see it (Figure 3).

Figure 3. *The Master's Discourse*

$$\frac{S_1 \rightarrow S_2}{\$ \blacktriangle a}$$

S_1 = The Master Signifier
S_2 = Knowledge
$\$$ = The Barred Subject
a = The object a (the fantasy object)

Embodying the function of suture, the master's discourse roots itself in what Lacan (2007) calls the 'ultrareduced myth of [the subject] being identical with his signifier' (p. 90). Here the master is the S1, the master signifier—whiteness itself—which, as Seshadri-Crooks has shown, serves the function of defining the discursive possibilities of the field of the Symbolic. Expanding upon Seshadri-Crooks' work, we can say that this master signifier of whiteness generates within this field what Lacan calls an S2, or knowledge. However, this knowledge, and the master himself as S1, roots itself upon a masking of the master's status as barred subject. Established knowledge masks this barring through the function of fantasy, the formula for which we can see obliquely adumbrated here at the bottom of Lacan's formula

for the master's discourse: $\$ \lozenge \mathbf{a}$. Where the formula for fantasy—$\$ \lozenge \mathbf{a}$—includes at its center the joining of a letter V with a second inverted letter V to generate a losange that indicates the recursive movement of fantasy (Figure 4), Lacan's triangle in the bottom of the formula for the master's discourse lacks the motility of fantasy (Figure 3).

Figure 4. *The Losange of Fantasy*   **Figure 5.** *The Vel of Alienation*
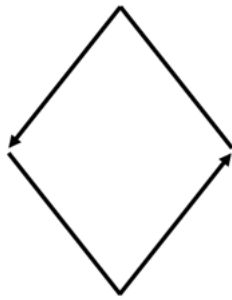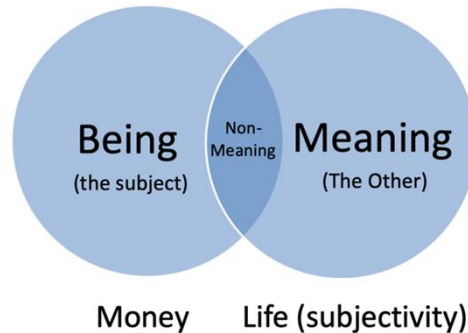
In the formula for fantasy, what we have in the lower half of the losange is a V that is representative of the Vel, or the forced choice each subject must make in selecting life and meaning over being (Figure 4). Lacan (1998) compares this choice to the robber's ultimatum: 'Your money or your life?' (p. 246). Through the splitting of the psyche that grants subjectivity, the subject enters into the Symbolic world of meaning, and thereby choses life, but does so by giving up access to something quite valuable, to all elements of the self that escape linguistic circumscription (Figure 5). The subject experiences this loss as the surrender of an internal vitality that Lacan terms 'being'. This being, which can be aligned with the libido, only finds expression through the unconscious, or the overlapping of being and meaning that Lacan calls 'Non-Meaning', which is the Freudian unconscious. The subject is thus both alienated from being and forced to live out this alienation within the linguistic realm of the Other, or the Symbolic.

However, Lacan imagines, with the inverted V of the losange, a reversal of the alienating Vel, one that he calls separation. This separation occurs for the subject when, through their 'skepticism' toward the Other and the discourses of the Symbolic, the subject begins to chart a path of their own making, a new relation to the desires of the Other and to the drives that the Other agitates in the subject (Lacan, 1998). Lacan's opaque triangular shape at the center of the lower portion of the formula for the master's discourse displays only one half of a shaded V, bringing to a halt the cyclical movement of the subject's path around fantasy. In Seminar 11, Lacan (1998) explains that fantasy is a 'loop [that] must be run through' (p. 274)— often multiple times—if it is to be traversed. What the master foregoes in embracing the S1 that defines them is completion of the path from fantasy to skepticism. Additionally, the

suturing of whiteness depends, ultimately, upon this same embrace of the S1 that impedes separation both from the Symbolic and from the fantasies of the Imaginary that the Symbolic buttresses.

THE KNOTTING OF BLACKNESS

This reading I have produced of race indicates how the imperative to recuperate lost being generates whiteness as a fantasy of plentitude. To suggest the impact of racialized reality on the black psyche, however, we must move from Lacan's earlier work on the three registers of the psyche to his focus on the sinthome. In the seminar on the sinthome, Seminar 23, Lacan (2016) imagines the possibility of the registers of the psyche detaching from each other. He presents two contrasting images, arguing that in most subjects the registers of the psyche are interlocked like a Borromean link (Figure 6), but that it is possible for a 'botched' connection to occur, an irregularity that can cause an unlinking of the registers (Figure 7).

Figure 6. *The Borromean Link*   **Figure 7.** *The Botched Link*
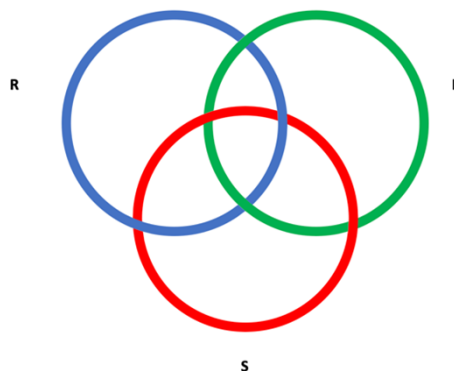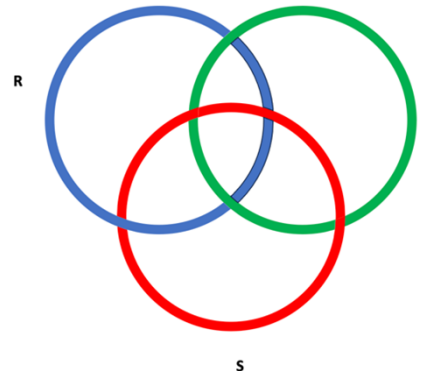
In Lacan's diagram of the botched link, the Symbolic remains tied to the Real, linked to each other in an interlocking chain, but the Imaginary floats freely without connection to the remaining two registers. This condition is quite distinct from the suturing of whiteness, which entails a linking of all three registers of the psyche, such that the Imaginary and Symbolic superimpose upon the Real. However, in our contemporary Symbolic, in which the signifiers of race script within reality itself the imagos of the Imaginary, black subjects are confronted with what I would call the psychic traumas of the Real. Lacan (1998) describes trauma as that which one can approach only through the breaking apart of the psyche into certain agencies, only through the fragmenting of the self. Such fragmenting can allow for emergence of the Real from below the Symbolic and Imaginary.

The history of American slavery and racism has aimed at fragmenting the black self and confronting black subjects with the Real of their lack through attacks upon their Imaginary and its fantasies of being. Racism seeks to constitute black as a metonym for lack by shattering the fantasies of wholeness through which the Imaginary sustains this illusory being. Lacan shows that the Imaginary is the source of subjective consistency, generating the egoic sense of self. The ego, Lacan (2016) says, is 'the idea of the self... as a body' (p. 129), and this body is framed in the Imaginary. The Imaginary is what lends contour to the body as the container that demarcates a self-image that distinguishes the subject—as a subject of fantasized being—from the mirrored other and the Symbolic world into which the subject is jettisoned. The Imaginary container of the body, encased by the skin that signals the borders of our racial and subjective differences, is what is attacked both physically in racial violence and imagistically in cultural stereotypes and oppressive discourses of race.

Lacan's theory allows an understanding that racism attacks the Imaginary of black subjects in order to remake the reality of the Symbolic and unleash the trauma of the Real. He both points to the psychosis-inducing possibilities of this unraveling of the Imaginary and suggests how subjects may evade it through deployment of the sinthome. To be clear, there is a distinction between Lacan's unlinked (or botched) psyche, which can be associated with psychosis, and the psyche of the average black subject; blacks are not simply made into psychotics by racism. Instead, the term psychotic defines a psychic structure for Lacan, one that develops through a foreclosure of one's entry into the Symbolic. What the struggles of race entail, contrastingly, is one's maneuvering *within* the Symbolic, one's battles against a racism aimed at dissolving an *existing* link between the Imaginary and the remaining registers. Lacan's Seminar 23, with its reading of James Joyce, allows some understanding of this maneuvering.

Joyce, as an individual emerging out of the postcolonial environment of his Irish homeland, models a process of reinforcing the link between the three registers of the psyche. Joyce, according to Lacan, develops a mode of writing that breaks apart the signifying structure of the dominant racialized Symbolic to create a literary artistry of his own making. Lacan asserts that it is the organizing name of the father that functions as the master signifier, granting the subject its designated place in the Symbolic. Joyce fails to identify with the name of his biological father. His disidentification parallels what may occur with the colonized subject who struggles to identify with the master signifiers of a white world. This disidentification leads to Joyce's inability to find a comfortable place for himself in the Symbolic, and it leaves him without access to the Imaginary fantasies typically granted the subject by the Symbolic to suture an image of their body and ego into the racial Symbolic. However, without the agency of the name of the father, Joyce takes on the challenge of making a name for himself, the endeavor of becoming a self-made artist who, in his novels as creative expressions of his own psychic reality, writes in a sort of remade language all his own.

Figure 8. *The Rectifying Ego*
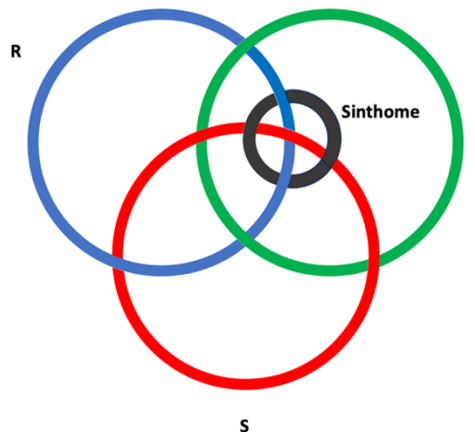
The image above of the rectifying ego suggests that Joyce's making of a name for himself is the very means through which he rectifies the botched registers of his psyche. The symptom of Joyce's suffering is the lack of a father's name necessary to reinforce the Imaginary self-image and link him to the Real of his lack and the Symbolic of the external world; but Joyce turns this symptom into a sinthome, a creative construct as a fourth ring that loops the three registers together to remake his identity and stabilize his psychic structure. I would suggest that Joyce's remaking of language and identity parallels much of the political and cultural activities of African Americans. The counter-discourse that centers so many African American Civil Rights activities upon notions that 'Black is Beautiful' and 'Black Lives Matter' involves, at least, an aesthetical revaluation of the Imaginary images of blackness, a revaluation aimed at granting blackness new space in the racist Symbolic. Also, Black culture is defined by a certain expressive distinctiveness; it is characterized by unique modes of speaking, a reassembling of standard English into what is called Ebonics, that signals both a distance from the broader Symbolic and a remaking of its instruments of meaning to better suit an expression of black ways of being in the world.

The inventiveness of black culture is perhaps best displayed by black speech and black art forms like the blues and jazz. These forms articulate a mode of rectifying an ego pinned to lack, with the blues emerging as a musical form whose very aesthetics is rooted in transformation of pain, loss, and lack into art, and with jazz expressing a distinctive virtuosity of improvisation. This black artistic and creative adaptiveness both highlights a limit to existing Lacanian theory and points in the direction of its possible expansion into new areas of inquiry centered upon race. In particular, it suggests the possibility of aligning the expressive forms of black art with ways of knowing that are excluded from the master's discourses in the white dominated Symbolic.

In *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan not only suggests the fantastical nature of the master's knowledge but, drawing from Hagel's master–slave dialectic, also notes that the master's knowledge is derived from the slave's knowledge. He specifies that this knowledge is stolen as a product of what he calls the slave's know-how or the slave's savoir faire. One may think of an art form like the blues as expressing the savoir-faire of black artists (pioneers like Robert Johnson or Jimi Hendrix, for example) who have gone on to inspire iconic musical forms largely associated with whiteness, including Rock and Roll and Heavy Metal. This savoir faire is what Lacan (2007) defines as a knowledge that is not known, a headless knowledge. It is a knowledge that may key into the libidinous *jouissance* of the body that is lost in the Vel of alienation, the *jouissance* and libido that escape linguistic circumscription within the ambit of the master's discourse.

Musical forms like the blues rely upon a know-how rooted in the virtuosity of black bodies. Black artistry, I suggest, facilitates a relation to the Imaginary of a selfhood that is resistantly inserted into the Symbolic. This Imaginary self frames an external image of blackness, emerging as stylized and even rebellious manners of being, patterns of dance and self-comportment that come to define cultural notions not only of what it means to be black, but also what it means to be 'cool', 'hip', and stylish. Black expressiveness frames popular images of an idealized mode of being-in-the-world that is imitated and appropriated; but what this expressiveness grows out of is an assumption of the body as a source of knowledge and *jouissance*, an assumption by the black subject that I would like to describe through attention to the literary work of African American author Toni Morrison.

ASSUMING THE BLACK BODY AND ITS *JOUISSANCE*

Morrison's novel *Paradise* introduces a relation to the black body that is outside of what we may call the master's discourse. It suggests a unique understanding of this knowledge of the body that I have referenced through its allusion to the Brazilian religious practice of Candomblé. Morrison (1999) wrote *Paradise* after traveling to Brazil and hearing of female practitioners of Candomblé who, she was told, were killed by a group of local men (Smith, 1998). What Morrison is able to address through remaking the story of these black female practitioners is the way that both blackness and femininity are insistently excluded from the expressive meanings readily availed subjects by the Symbolic. Morrison shows in the novel how the female body, in particular, is scorned as a result of patriarchal reliance upon Western religious beliefs. She turns to the practice of Candomblé to imagine an agency that can come to black women through practices refused full integration into a patriarchal, racist Symbolic. Candomblé is an African-derived religious practice that syncretically blends Catholicism and African belief systems. In Morrison's *Paradise*, the main character, Connie, can only come to embrace her body by recalling the practices of Candomblé that she learned in childhood but had abandoned in adulthood.

Connie's character exemplifies an altered relation to the body and language. Connie, as a child, is stolen from Brazil and taken to America by a group of nuns who teach her that the body is bound to sin. She rejects all relation to her body until she falls in love with a man who helps awaken sexual desires that alert her to deeper longings for all she has lost in her diasporic transport from Brazil to America. In the life she now lived, she had embraced the head nun as her mother, supplanting with this matron both the biological mother she lost in Brazil and the mother country she is stolen from. Connie is driven by a sense of lack that she fantasizes can be filled by her lover, but her journey as a character is toward recognition of what she has truly lost at the levels of her own body and psyche.

When Connie realizes that her lover cannot satisfy her deeper losses, she reverts to her mother tongue and starts to explore the gaps in between the meanings made available to her in English and her native Portuguese. Within the interstices of language, she finds unarticulated desires that she had misread alternately as religious then as sexual longing. What Connie had lost was a relation to the *jouissance* of the body that could not be thought in the Christian-inflected English imposed upon her by the nuns. In Lacanian theory, the subject is conceived of as comprising drives that manifest a primal, insuppressible lifeforce or libido that agitates all psychic activity. These drives are polymorphous and able to cathect all regions of the body with their *jouissance* of pleasure and pain. However, the drives are curtailed by language in the Vel, which teaches the subject proper, culturally acceptable ways to enjoy, and by the body itself, which channels *jouissance* into regions of pleasure that become bound to the orifices of the body. What Connie explores and seeks to regain is an individualized relation to the body that is less restrained by the racial and patriarchal conventions of her adopted language and religion.

By the end of the novel, Connie not only reevaluates her relation to the body but also comes to embrace for herself the role of Candomblé priestess, initiating other women into her practices by shaving their heads and cleansing them as they dance in the open rain. During this dance, Connie becomes possessed by a spirit that seems to recall the African orishas revered in her recovered religion. Scholars of Candomblé have argued that the act of possession, the 'implantation of the essence or energy of an orixá into the body of the devotee' is a way to mark 'blackness with divinity' (Harding, 2000, p. 156). The black body that had remained open to fantastical scripting by the white patriarchy is rewritten by Connie herself as a divinity she now embodies. Connie's possession opens up the body to a configuration of the drive not normally experienced in the Western Symbolic, a configuration of pleasure, pain, and bodily *jouissance* that Connie may begin to bring into language and into her own Symbolic understanding.

Connie comes ultimately to resist the denial of the *jouissance* of the body that had been forced upon her by the racist patriarchy. However, what her struggles emerges from, finally, is the elemental devaluing of the black body that we have seen from the start of our discussion, beginning with officer Wilson's shooting of Michael Brown. There is a knowledge

of the body, and even a *jouissance* of this body, that is not admitted into Western thought. Lacan himself recognizes the existence of this *jouissance*, but he does not take us far enough into the process of theorizing it. To the extent that it is the black body that is often read as animal, virile, the epitome of an otherness that is unknowable, blackness often speaks this *jouissance*, both within white fantasy and within the headless knowledge that remains unadmitted into the dominant Symbolic world of meaning.

It is significant to this discussion of race, whiteness, and the *jouissance* of the body that, during Seminar 17, in the midst of Lacan's lectures on the four discourses, Lacan's class was interrupted by an ongoing protest. Lacan (2007) addresses a particular interruption that was caused by a former Algerian citizen, whose country had been colonized by the French. Lacan (2007) describes the incident as a 'charming thing' that had 'emerged' from 'the real of decolonization' (p. 34). However, the Real of decolonialization announces a limit to Lacan's theorizing. In the seminar, Lacan (2007) shows that there are 'truths' about the master that are 'split off' from what Lacan calls 'the mythical support of certain societies' (p. 90). He says that such truths are 'ethnographic,' and he insists that they cannot be studies by psychoanalysis. What I suggest, however, is that race delineates an ethnographic and psychic truth about the subject, white and nonwhite, that should not be ignored. It is the task of psychoanalysis not only to allow the emergence of the ethnographic subject into its field, but also to fully confront through this often faceless subject the Real of decolonialization this subject disruptively brings to whiteness's fantasized realities.

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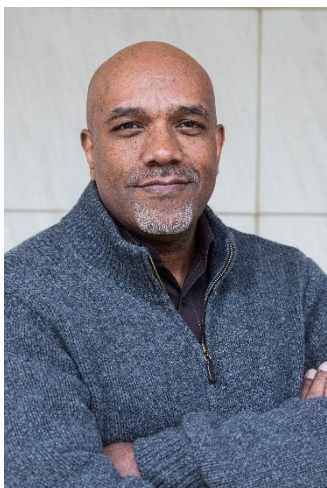
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PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Crypt: About the colonised unconscious

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ABSTRACT

Based on the psychoanalytic clinical experience in a *quilombo* in Brazil, we propose the thesis, shared by countercolonial intellectuals, that the unconscious heir to colonisation processes has a specific form of defence: the crypt. As a drive intensity not printed in the mother language of *jouissance*, the crypt remains untranslated *in* the linguistic sign. We explain the impossible translations and their *fueros* based on the theory of S. Freud, J. Lacan, and S. Peirce. Given the forced linguistic migration, the *interpretamen* loses its ability to link the object to the *representamen*, requiring clinical work on the unconscious writing and the memory.

KEYWORDS: psychoanalysis; coloniality; crypt; unconscious; memory

> We speak the same language because we speak different versions of the same language without a clear centre, without a single determination. A language of many truths. (Translated from Galindo, 2022, p. 209)

This article is situated at the interface between psychoanalysis and studies of coloniality. It intends to contribute, from a psychoanalytic perspective, to the decolonial turn in the field of social sciences, especially regarding the analysis of the colonisation of being. As a gap between the somatic and the psychic, the drive—one of the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis—disorganised the quarrel between organic evidence and the determination of overculture.

As a gap between representation and existence, the unconscious interposes itself like an interval, 'marked by a blank or occupied by a lie' (Lacan, 1953/1998a, p. 260). It is influenced

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by the legacy of the first colonial wave, dating from the period of the Christian *Reconquista* in Europe and the overseas advance in the invasion of the Americas in the 16th century—which resonates as alive and current. As a psychoanalyst, I collect the way in which the unconscious, always colonised by the symbolic *Other*, responds to the civilising standoffs of colonial malaise. My theoretical proposition, in this text, as a white woman and university professor in the role of a psychoanalyst, originates from a clinical intervention. I was, along with three other women—all psychoanalysts and black—undertaking the transferential work of listening–record–witness–intervention in an urban *quilombo* in the Brazilian city where I live: the capital of the state of Minas Gerais.

Usually known as *Maroon Communities*, in Brazil the *quilombo* keeps the cultural heritage of spaces that resisted the slavery of black people coming from the African continent during the colonial period. We opted for adopting the original term, since it has no translation. It derives from the work *Kilombo*, from the *Mbundu* language of the *Bantu* language family, with the likely meaning of 'society of young African warriors'.

The clinical listening started with a resident from this *quilombo*, a spokeswoman bringing a demand of psychic suffering from another woman, also black. The demand was formulated, from the outset, from a collective mode of nonindividualised belonging. A woman suffered psychically in this *quilombo*. Another woman delivered her demand for analysis. It was formulated through the negative route of transference: 'I do not believe in psychology'. It is important to say that this *quilombo* is inserted in an urban and Western context with which it shares language, rationality, and aesthetic; nonetheless, it safeguards its own religion and some traditional cultural dimensions of Afrodiasporic origin. In this sense, psychology and psychoanalysis are usual practices accessed by this demographic, especially through public healthcare, offered free of charge by the Brazilian state's mental health aid network.

It is not without effects to have a white body in this racialised clinical scene. It is no coincidence that there is a confrontation with the heritage of the slave period, in the form of a *quilombo*, in the Brazilian state that carried out the third extractive colonial cycle of the Portuguese Empire—the cycle of gold. This cycle is responsible for the expansion of the Portuguese language with the *Banta* influence of *quibumbo*, the presence of the *Gbe* and the *Yoruba* in the country, and the more than 400 indigenous languages that existed throughout Brazil. It left its ecological, political, economic, and subjective illnesses as a trace in the ore-filled mountains.

When a psychoanalyst moves from the protected scene of the analytical *setting* of the office, she loses on her way out her supposedly neutral and universal point of view, which is in fact accommodated to the geopolitical, historical, racial, gender, and class horizon of the frame. The territory, as an unconscious plane in the act of speech, structured by the language, and also a field of *lalangue* of jouissance, modulates the semantic dimension and the misunderstanding to radicalise the foreignness of what exceeds the structure of language.

Lalangue is another neologism created by Jacques Lacan which concerns the mother language and the child's phonetic lalation, referred less to the signifier and structured language, and more to the body and jouissance.

The act of listening to the unconscious—always an event of the body as an act of the *parlêtre. Parlêtre* is also a Lacanian neologism, which means the subject, carried out by the act of speech and his body of *jouissance*—in a postcolonised territory has a property that I discovered in my practice and share in this article. Given the forced linguistic migration (Galindo, 2022; Melman, 2000), the devastating occupation of the colonies, the decimation of indigenous villages of original peoples, and the abusive use of the enslaved body, the Real of the colonial trauma of colonisation produces a specific language effect: the crypt. This is what I write about here.

NOT BEING ABLE TO SAY IT IN THE LANGUAGE

In inaugurating clinical work in this context, I witnessed a peculiar way in which the structure of language articulates itself from the unconscious plane as disaster, tremor, defence, as marked by colonial history, a spectre. There is a specific mode not yet theorised by psychoanalysis, precisely because it was obscured by the Eurocentric discourse and made invisible by the colonial discourse (Guerra, 2022). It concerns the meeting point between drive and representation, blunted in the linguistic sign as an excess that could not gain a psychic impression, given the forced linguistic migration dated from the colonisation period—which returns fixed in the insignias related to it, producing meaning in a nondialectical short circuit. The absence of the original inscription of transatlantic trauma, in the lalangue of *jouissance*, maintains a structural fissure in the linguistic sign, whose drive intensity is, in turn, encrypted by the foreign language that fixes, freezes, and prevents the drive slip that would produce its possibilities of meaning.

There is a corruption at the sign level, taken from Peirce's semiotics—whose incidence on Lacanian thought was responsible for an openness to the Real in his theory, with effects on psychoanalytic clinical practice. This sign adulteration that I witnessed is due to a specific mode of relationship between the three terms of the Peircean sign: object (an idea associated with the *representamen*), *representamen* (index image of the physical object), and *interpretamen* (mediator of the relationship between object and *representamen*) (Peirce, 2005). We have identified a suspension or a corruption in the binding capacity between the object and the index (*representamen*) at the connective level of interpretation (*interpretamen*).

There is an impossibility of making the connection between the idea and the index image of the object, given the imposition of another radically unknown foreign language in which to write experience in the field of the symbolic Other. In this way, experience is reduced to the

index, which, short-circuited in its possibility of being represented, remains frozen in the signified (*signifié*) attributed to it by the coloniser's language. Thus, it retains all the death drive charge as living and current intensity, not dampened or historicised by language, in the form of articulated signifiers (*signifiant*). These indexes thus become firm orders and nondialectisable images (Lacan, 2018).

This finding is shared by two decolonial intellectuals: Sílvia Cusicanqui (2021) and Rita Segato (2021). The use of the decolonial term here is aligned with the critique of the imperial constitution of geopolitics of power, aimed at the epistemic movement against coloniality, as a possibility of sustaining the radical difference of alterity. Cusicanqui (2021), an Aymara indigenous intellectual and countercolonial sociologist, testifies to this sign corruption by verifying that words, in postcolonised countries, lose their capacity for representation, for connection between the public and the private, emerging in violent uprisings as a burst of drive when reached or mobilised. 'In colonialism, there is a very peculiar function for words: they do not designate reality, but rather conceal it…. Thus, words became a fictional record, full of euphemisms that hide reality instead of designating it' (Cusicanqui, 2021, p. 29). We see that truth for psychoanalysis has a fictional structure, its imbrication being what constitutes psychic reality. What opposes fiction, what opposes the writing of history in the world of representation, is drive immobility, which indicates the presence of the *Thing* (*das Ding*) in the Real without representation. However, let us understand Cusicanqui's observation which greatly interests us.

As a sociologist, she recovers the dimension of public discourses as ways of not saying, supported by hierarchical beliefs and naturalised inequalities, incubated in common sense. From time to time, they are laid bare in explosive forms of racial, ethnic, and gender conflict.

> I believe that these hidden, buried forms of the cultural conflicts that we carry and cannot rationalise or even talk about are naked there. It costs us to speak, to connect our public language with the private language. It costs us to say what we think and to become aware of this drive background, of unconscious conflicts and shame. (Translated from Cusicanqui, 2021, p. 30)

For this reason, she finds and dedicates herself to a sociology of images, seeking in drawings rather than in historical texts and documents the elements of colonial domination and its reverberations. The transit between image and word is part of the methodology and pedagogy she adopts when bridging the gap between standard-cultured Castilian and colloquial modes of speech, as well as between lived experience and visual experience, especially among indigenous migrant students of *Aymara* or *Qhichwa* origin. In addition, for her, images allow us to break the block of the official versions of the senses not censored by the official language.

She brings as an example, the letter addressed to the King of Spain by Waman Poma de Ayala, written between 1612 and 1615, with more than 1000 pages and 300 drawings made

in ink, full of original ethnic terms and oral idioms, songs and *jayllis* (victory chants). It is in the drawings, more than in the text, that the cataclysmic feeling referring to the mass subordination imposed by colonisation and the pre-Hispanic indigenous society is revealed. She calls this proposal a visual or iconographic theorisation of the colonial system or situation and prefers a cinematographic reading of the works to a semiotic one.

An incisive example of the visual analysis shows an image in which an indigenous adult is disproportionately portrayed, shrunken, in the face of a Spanish coloniser. Since Spanish terms such as *oppression* or *exploitation* do not exist in the *Aymara* or *Qhichwa* languages, the word *jisk'chaña* sums them up in an association between humiliation and the condition of servitude. 'Humiliation and disorder go hand in hand' (translated from Cusicanqui, 2021, p. 39) in the *Reverse World* drawn in the work. 'The narrow view of academic criticism, obedient to the notion of "historical truth", overlooked the interpretive value of the image' (Cusicanqui, 2021, p. 45).

The images preserve, for the sociologist, the power of the world's *poiesis* that is kept in the walk and in the *kipus* (mnemotechnical recording system of the ancient Andean peoples). 'Indigenous alterity can be seen as a new universality, which opposes the chaos and colonial destruction of the world and life' (translated from Cusicanqui, 2021, p. 48). Although, for psychoanalysis, the real—and not the imaginary—is the point that articulates what does not give in, let us keep, for now, from the author's sociological theory: (1) the impossibility of association between the image and the word, (2) the reduction of the power of truth to the image, and (3) the drive irruption when one bumps into what they are burying.

The assertion of this mode of obstacle to drive writing gains volume when, in her anthropological studies on the Black Oedipus, Rita Segato (2021) also verifies an encrypted sign dimension referring to racism—which gains a specific form in Brazil. 'As a cognitive and affective operation of purge, exclusion and violence are not exercised on another people, but they emanate from a structure housed inside the subject, planted at the very origin of this structure's emergence trajectory' (translated from p. 243). Analysing the Brazilian postcolonial context, Segato (2021) dedicates a thorough reflection on the unconscious ways of defending colonial violence and its reverberations, in the analysis of the figure of the black woman in Brazil.

The author works on the duality of Brazilian motherhood: on the one hand, the legal and biological figure of the white mother; on the other, the *de facto* mother—the black mother. The author compares the double maternal inscription, in the Brazilian anthropological context, to two figures from religions of African origin in the 'mythological description of the pantheon of deities' (Segato, 2021, p. 221). She likens *Iemanjá* to the legitimate mother, equivalent to the white, legal, cold, hierarchical, distant, and indifferent mother. Meanwhile, *Oxum*, mother of creation, of adoption, whose true affection is mixed with the symbolism of

the sea, treacherous and false, is associated with the historical tradition of the Atlantic and of slavery.

The ambivalence of affections and the erasure of the history of slavery through the exercise of the dual maternal function in Brazil—mother and nanny—is the effect of an operation of *foreclosure* of the black mother by the official white discourse of academia and science until then, updated in the images of the paintings of babies with their wet nurses in the colonial and imperial period. Foreclosure is a juridical figure that implies the loss of the deadline to request a right, as if the criminal situation, by not being reported or legally registered, lost its value of legal effect and existence. Transposed into psychoanalysis, it implies the nonsymbolic inscription of an experience, which, due to the absence of representation, returns its effect on the Real register.

Segato (2021) reads the defence that takes the baby as being the country Brazil and the black mother Africa, in an allusion to the detachment in which the mother, the darkness of the skin, and the original Africa are simultaneously sacrificed. 'The non-white mother is uprooted and her possibility of inscription—which still remains coded and *encrypted*, as always happens in the psyche—is hidden by smuggling, in her place, another scene that definitively blocks the possibility of rescue' (translated from Segato, 2021, p. 229; emphasis added).

Once again, we have a block, a scene that sutures the possibility of rescuing the experience. Segato names this casing as a *crypt* with which, like Cusicanqui, she is confronted in her encounter with a story whose pages have been torn out. Although all histories are always written second-hand in the treatment of the death drive, both authors point out a specific blocking operation with the language heir to processes of colonisation and linguistic migration. This obstacle has to do with the way in which imperial languages imposed themselves on the native languages in the colonies and in which language was established in colonised nations. For psychoanalysis, this will be a drive effect, a *jouissance* one.

New languages were born, and others have changed since bygone historical times (Galindo, 2022; Nascimento, 2019). However, according to intense disagreements and discussions in the area of historical linguistics, nothing was as devastating as colonial violence in the creation of new languages. In general, the transformation and birth of new languages were phenomena arising from the arrival of peoples who mixed with a substrate, or even eliminated it, while imposing a new variety, adopting what was there or generating a kind of fusion between languages. In Brazil, the country heir to Portuguese colonisation, the complex constitution of language holds indigenous influences and Afro-grammatical structures arising from enslavement, whose evolution, differentiation, fragmentation, and suppression composed an intricate mosaic with lost origins and ties built by rape, invasion, dispossession, and all kinds of colonising violence.

If Tupi and Macro-jê languages are the largest families of original peoples, and the Bantu, Gbe, and Yoruba languages are those of African origin with the highest incidence in the formation of the Portuguese language in Brazil, we can understand why, for example, we shortened the plurals (they came in the prefix and not in the suffix with an 's') (Galindo, 2022) or the exchange of the 'l' for the 'r' of the Yoruba matrix (Gonzalez, 2020). 'Our Portuguese seems to have been structurally altered by these speakers of African languages' (Galindo, 2022, p. 186). However, what interests us here is what a mother language—*lalangue*—keeps from the sound as an equivocation that resonates as an effect of *jouissance* of the body. How does a language affect the *jouissance*? The effects of the linguicide—of the suppression of language, culture, family, economy, physical, and symbolic territory of belonging—displaced, with enslavement, the colonised body from its possibility of rewriting. It fissured the linguistic sign, without recomposition.

Wiltord (2019) proposes a thesis for the *creole* language, the product of French colonisation in the Antilles, based on a disbelief in symbolic authority. For her, the structure of the articulated *creole* utterances in French is inaudible to those who speak them, in an unconscious denial that focuses on the division of the subject by language. Otherness is founded as authority, producing a degradation of symbolic authority and a superegoic injunction for denial, manifested by distrust of the coloniser's language, a refusal to subjectively engage in dialogue and a use of allusions, periphrases, and subtext in the substitution of words to name objects.

In summary, it is the '*colonial perversion of the symbolic dimension of language*, in relation to the *jouissance* of the body carried by the spoken creole language' (Wiltord, 2019, p. 151). One of the effects of this colonial perversion is the obstacle to the loss of *jouissance* necessary for the emergence of desire and the prevalence not of the repressed symbolic trait as a condition for fantasy to create the envelope around this void, but of the look as a virulent drive object, in which it finds the 'pregnancy of an imagined sexual interpretation of the *real* that has not received oedipal treatment' (p. 152) as in believing in demons. However, in addition to Oedipus and Symbolic, the author highlights lalangue as the one that collects the effects of *jouissance* of the body in the equivocation of a spoken language.

Structured language, for Lacan, is what one tries to know about lalangue, and with lalangue being the deposit of *jouissance* transmitted by the act of speech, equivocation has more to do with this *jouissance* and its unconscious experience than with etymology or grammar. Therefore, Wiltord (2019) proposes the invention of the *creole* language as a treatment of the traumatic reality of colonisation in the Antilles, through the intruding signifiers it introduces not as representatives of the subject, but rather as *ballast of the deposit of colonial jouissance*. Once again, we are facing signifiers that do not represent, but rather carry *jouissance* for their drive remains.

Again, a decolonial author opens the way for us to think of colonisation as producing an unconscious effect more devastating than those already known—such as repression—witnessing the real impossibility of linguistic reach of the symbolic. All this results, in my view, from an adulteration at the level of the sign of *jouissance*, as we will see later.

This is, unlike Freud's classical theory of trauma, a radical suppression of the possibility of assigning meaning to a traumatic experience, whose atrocious colonial *jouissance* brings no possibility of satisfaction (death drive) and remains brutalised and blunted by the imposed foreign language. Unlike the sexual trauma analysed by Freud (1895), there is no hyperlibidinised first scene, which does not find sexual translation (time 2 in Freud) and which, revived in a second updated scene, could finally be translated, associated with its sexual dimension. This is not a current situation (1) hypercathected by the old situation (2). On the contrary, what the children of colonial rape show us is the almost impossible effort to invent resources for the meaning of colonial trauma, for the drive articulation of the deadly *jouissance* of colonisation—which returns updated in meaningless frozen insignia, deposited as a spectrum on bodies whose colour or ethnicity indicate the remains of colonisation. We are facing a current situation (scene 2) influenced by another frozen language and removed from its power of signification (scene 1), a crypt.

How could there be no unconscious incidences of colonisation, if the unconscious is structured exactly like a language and its structure is what attempts to constitute a *savoir* about the mother *lalangue* of *jouissance*? How could there be no effects of *jouissance* if the violent imposition of foreign languages on original languages and the annihilation of the humanity of different African peoples and ethnicities are the constitutive basis of modernity? It is no coincidence that the mask of slave Anastacia as a colonial remnant is repeatedly displayed. Imperial brutality has also affected our land, Pindorama, since colonial times, and the iterative return of the inassimilable *jouissance* of its violence, thus encrypted by the sign, must be formalised to be read and treated decolonially by the psychoanalytic field.

A THEORY OF THE CRYPT: ABRAHAM AND TOROK'S MOURNING ILLNESS

A theory of the crypt was developed by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (1995) in order to explain a pathology of mourning (Antunes, 2003; Moreno-Cárdenas, 2023). They start from the analysis of both the dimension and the destiny of the unrepresentable nucleus of its structure, source of the possibility or impossibility of the emergence of the word, and representation of the lived experience. The loss of the mourner would produce a libidinal excess that, experienced as an orgasmic irruption, would engender the affection of shame, which, later, would gain the wrapping of secrecy, as an unconfessable crime.

The relationship with the lost object, through shame and secrecy, would thus lead to the constitutive base of the crypt. It would be articulated to a primary affection of the baby with

the mother, based on the notion of inheriting the pain of separation from the mother, from which words are also born. What is buried with the crypt would be the ambivalence, seduction, or lack of the lost object, perpetuated by the fantasy of incorporation. The theory, based on the psychoanalysis of object relations, understands the mother–infant relationship as a dual unit.

In this process, the authors differentiate incorporation from introjection. Incorporation without translation would be lived in the act and moved by shame in relation to the secret, due to a difficulty in introjecting the lost object. Therefore, incorporation, for the authors, would be a problem at the level of introjection and would differ from it in the mourning process. One of the consequences of this difficulty would in fact be the endocryptic identification as an effect of the traumatic dimension of this pathological grief. The identification of the lost object would occur by incorporating traces of the ghost, of the life of a person-tomb. Additionally, it would be linked to secrets of ancestors that one carries unknowingly; an unfathomable double that is important to highlight, as it implies a transgenerational dimension of the transmission of something that is impossible to pronounce.

> A saying buried in one of the parents becomes for the child a dead person without a grave. This ghost then returns from the unconscious and comes to haunt, inducing phobias, madness, obsessions. Its effect can even cross generations and determine the fate of a race. (Translated from Abraham and Torok, 1974, cited by Antunes, 2003, p. 64)

The crypt would lie between the dynamic Unconscious and the Ego of introjection as a kind of 'artificial unconscious, installed within the Ego' (translated from Abraham and Torok, 1995, p. 239). Like a wall, the crypt, this kind of tomb, would make the unconscious more impervious to the outside world, less filterable. The crypt would come from this rift and would be structurally distinct from that operated by repression in neurosis. It does not slip, either metonymically or metaphorically, through the chain of signifiers. Neurotic repression would be distinguished from the conservative repression of the crypt. Its consequence, the freezing of the encrypted, would also differ from the neurotic symptom.

In Freudian neurosis theory, repression separates idea and affect, sending the ideational content—source of conflict—to the unconscious system (*Ucs*), keeping affect free in the psychic apparatus. Affect links itself to new substitutive representations in relation to the originally repressed one, since they are less intensely distressing and passable through the libidinal sieve of the cathexes of the preconscious–conscious system (*Pcs–Cs*). In conversion hysteria, the new libidinal investment occurs through the cathexis of a metaphorical substitute of somatic or motor bodily nature, which, by condensation, attracts the entire cathexis to itself.

'In conversion hysteria, the process of repression is completed by the formation of the symptom, and it does not need, as in anguish hysteria [phobia], to continue until a second

phase' (translated from Freud, 1915a, p. 180). In anguish hysteria, repression succeeds in removing and replacing the idea, but fails to spare the displeasure. Therefore, it undertakes a new attempt to escape, a second phase in which the phobia itself and its necessary avoidances are formed, aimed at preventing the release of anguish and displeasure.

Finally, in the case of obsessional neurosis, the rejected idea is replaced by 'a substitute by displacement' (Freud, 1915a, p. 181) through the cathexis of new representations, small and indifferent, and fails to avoid displeasure. Thus, the repression of the native idea from the Pcs–Cs system is obstinately maintained, as it causes abstention from action, a motor entrapment of the impulse by the idea. 'The work of repression in obsessional neurosis continues in a sterile and endless struggle' (Freud, 1915a, p. 181), and at times moves from obsessive ideas to compulsive acts and from these to rituals.

In the case of the crypt, the defence is more radical and finds no correspondence in language—neither by metonymic slippage, nor by metaphorical condensation—through substitutive signifier rearrangements of the original conflict. It is linked to an unrepresentable core that keeps a dimension of impossibility to speak. It is related to the unconfessable elements of desire, linked to the lost object, which cannot even be pronounced due to the shame they provoke. It is as if, in the face of desire—thus made equivalent to a crime by the authors—a rift of the ego appeared at the very moment of desire's realisation, which, illegitimate, unconfessable, and unnameable, encrypts itself, not becoming translatable.

We highlight from this aspect of the differentiation between the theory of Freudian neurosis and the theory of the crypt by Abraham and Torok (1995) both the transgenerational aspect they assign to the word-tomb, its dimension of interruption of drive movement at the point of its connection with the word, and the formation of the crypt itself. The defensive immobilising effect of the crypt thus opposes the unconscious defence engendered by repression, governed by the libidinal logic of pleasure–unpleasure.

It is worth remembering that Freud adds to his theory of the pleasure principle, postponed by the principle of reality, a new drive dualism with the introduction of the notion of death drive. This always remains without the possibility of connection with representation, in tension with the life drive—pathways that never found 'any possibility of pleasure and that never, even long ago, brought satisfaction, even to impulsive drives that have since been repressed' (translated from Freud, 1920, p. 34). This impossibility to represent will be of great relevance to our proposition. It is responsible for the movement from compulsion to repetition.

The encrypted, thus, refers to content that cannot be displayed in the form of words, remaining unspeakable inside the crypt, as 'words buried alive' (translated from Abraham and Torok, 1995, p. 240). The fact, in itself, remains in a hidden existence attested by a manifest absence at the level of communication, because it is libidinally disaffected, buried in a lost unconscious zone.

This process would be linked to something that the couple calls 'antimetaphor', in which the incorporation process produces a 'demetaphorisation', taken literally, because the mouth cannot enunciate certain phrases that become the thing itself. This theory, too, is linked to the theory of mourning, because behind the fantasy of incorporation that sustains the crypt, there is an unavoidable mourning, preceded by a state of shame-laden self. (Translated from Moreno-Cárdenas, 2023, p. 135)

The defence of the crypt would produce the repetitive return to that point of impossibility, in a fantasy of hibernation. In addition, cryptonyms, a kind of unpronounceable words with multiple meanings, would hide by allusion a foreign and hidden meaning. Thus, the subject cannot manifest itself in relation to its loss, whose impossibility of communication and meaning installs, within the mourning process, a 'secret tomb' (Abraham & Torok, 1995). This would also be the phantasmatic dimension of the unconfessable fantasy of incorporating the object.

In addition, supported by the dual mother–infant relationship, the pair explains the point at which the word does not reach the thing. In this relationship, the 'de-maternalisation' would imply a transmission of the psychic apparatus from the mother to the baby in one of two aspects: word or representation. Words, in a Freudian sense, are taken as a mnemic trace or acoustic representation (representations of the thing in the *Ucs* system) that, associated with the representations of the word, enter the *Pcs-Cs* system. They can thus be taken as an act of speech or as a phantasmatic embodiment. Hence the insurmountable words linked to transgenerational secrecy forge an obstacle to translation, becoming a pathological ghost, distinct from a structuring ghost. The gaps of the unspeakable would return in the next generation as voids, hauntings, unassimilable ruptures, or ghosts to be dealt with.

UNCONSCIOUS WRITING AND DRIVE *JOUISSANCE*

The theoretical proposal of Abraham and Torok (1995) brings clinical elements of a very rich approach to the unconscious process of mourning, a true finding. The mode of defence that they verify in the freezing of the crypt—which I understand to happen at the level of the sign—prevents the movement of signification and, therefore, stops the drive circuit, being described very precisely in the mourning illness.

The transgenerational hypothesis as a transmission of what is not in the symbolic, but still exists and produces subjective effects from the real, to put it in a Lacanian manner, is orienting. The relationship between affection, representation, and their not exactly predictable destinies—but made possible since Freud—inaugurate an inspiring theoretical condition about the unspeakable or unrepresentable, in the face of which we return to Lacan. The impossible, for Lacan, has a double dimension: the insufficiency of the system of

representation in reaching the totality of the thing, and the logical emptiness of the very structure of language as a condition of the system of representation.

However, in the theoretical foundation of Abraham and Torok, there is a relationship of homology between the object of reality and the object inscribed as representation. This relationship gives rise to a covering that hides exactly the hiatus through which the detention of the drive takes place. It is precisely because there is the image and the word, interpreted in their relationship in the sign, that it gains the value of representation. Thus, even if we can decant the phantasmagorical real from the impossible to represent in the crypt and its transgenerational envelope as a tomb, a step beyond—and in a certain way, distinct from—this path needs to be taken when we resume our clinical testimony of the colonial past.

It is worth retaking the lived experience of the clinical practice with the unconscious updated in the *quilombola* reality at this point, as a presentified past of colonisation transmitted by its remains, according to Moreno-Cárdenas' (2023) thesis. Let's resume the clinical scene. Melissa is a cisgender, bisexual, black, and *quilombola* adult woman, an abusive user of alcohol and other drugs, a mother, and about 35 years old. She is restless, having difficulty sleeping, tormenting the urban *quilombo* where she resides. The *quilombola* architecture is very peculiar: the houses have little space between them, with a logic in which the smell of a relative's kitchen announces whether food is ready in their house. The noise of the domestic routine shows that there is no depression among the residents. The codes of belonging and of communication are very characteristic of a *quilombola* way of life, for example.

The demand for analytical listening for Melissa is stated by another resident, daughter of the current matriarch of the *quilombo*. The *quilombola* hierarchy goes through the centrality of the female figure. The matriarch, however, is currently a recluse, suffering from a kidney disease. She never appears publicly, despite her photos being shown and her story being constantly retold. As we ask for the origins of Melissa's suffering, a much broader demand for clinical listening emerges. Out of the approximately 35 residents, two-thirds are in mental distress, and some are medicated: anxiety, depression, bulimia, alcoholism, panic disorder. Diagnoses by the *DSM* proliferate.

Where do these pains come from? The collective clinical narrative dates from two years earlier, when the residents of this *quilombo* were legally threatened with eviction, and the ownership of their lands was put in court by real estate and financial interests of wealthy heirs, of a financial and class condition superior to that of the *quilombolas*. The violence in the execution of the lawsuit, carried out with five large vehicles under police command, lasted for a year of moral harassment with constant and persistent surveillance by the police on the dead-end street where the *quilombo* is located. The violent scene is updated, repeated, and frozen, until then without a translation, an immemorial past of expropriation of their own land, moulded by the exploitative colonisation that characterised the occupation of Brazil.

This is when her family, living in four lots with about eleven houses and families of varied composition, in a neighbourhood that became charming in the city due to gentrification processes in the region, discovers its roots in slavery. By seeking their documents of possession and ownership of the land, they recover their history, tied to colonisation processes. The black and formerly enslaved couple, composed of the matriarch from five generations before, had acquired this territory—at the time far from the large city centre, a farm—to reside with their families. They maintained the same traditions of *quilombola* parties to the present day, which guaranteed them the constitutional right to be recognised as a *quilombo* and to guarantee ownership of the land. A new name emerges where before there was not even a trace of this history: 'we are *quilombolas*'.

However, a remnant of untranslated *jouissance* remained there in the symptoms, that residents lived in unique ways and in the image of slumification and poverty, in the social rest that they embodied. Melissa seemed to us to embody the corrupted index of a discontinuity that it is impossible to attribute meaning to. We proposed, alongside classical individual clinical listening on demand, the methodology of psychoanalytic conversations (Miller, 2013).

The psychoanalytic conversation is a methodology developed by the Freudian Field (Miller, 2013). The method is understood as having a clinical foundation. It consists of collectivised free association, realised around a constitutional standoff, having in the surprise element the incidence of the act of speech. Its effects are singularly gathered by the participants, one by one.

Through the work of free collectivised association together with the residents of the adult generation, the third generation of the *quilombo* began to recount their trajectory and that of their ancestors. The malaise manifested—which we can coin as colonial—in the reported symptoms was dated from the scene of law enforcement through the police approach, which always returned, without slipping. The complaint against Melissa also remained and grew, as if eliminating her would solve the suffering of each *quilombola*.

It was after a clinical hospitalisation of Melissa, on her return, that she was able, as an index of malaise, to produce a discursive effect by moving her position. She received a diagnosis of *schizophrenia* in this hospitalisation, a diagnostic name that produces a meaning by identification with two deceased aunts, through which a secret is revealed. Upon returning to the *quilombo*, she brings the history of the ancestors in a conversation. The matriarch of the first generation of the *quilombo*, when she died, had left her symbolic legacy as an ex-slave woman to her eldest daughter. The new matriarch, at the time, was recognised by all. As an authority, she drew the *quilombo's* destiny, distributed its lands and its affections in a personalised way, generating affective differences, always inequitable in the epic drama of a family. When she died, she left behind two sisters diagnosed with *schizophrenia*, who were unable to continue the role of matriarch—which was contingently occupied by one of her granddaughters, part of the third generation.

Melissa says that they were all afraid that she would now, as is said in Brazil, '*kill* her grandmother in disgust'—the current and sick matriarch who never appeared—just as her mother had been held responsible for the death of the former matriarch, legitimate heir to the *quilombola* power, due to her *difficult* teenage behaviour. Her mother had been a very *rebellious* teenager, also a drug user, and carried the index of *quilombola* malaise, transferred to Melissa. The residents of the *quilombo* resented Dodora, Melissa's mother, as if she *were* the incarnate evil which would have killed the matriarch in disgust. They blamed themselves for not having saved her from death, even though they knew of her incurable illness. This was the thread that Melissa was able to rescue after returning from her hospitalisation. She, *schizophrenic* like her great-aunts and *difficult* like her mother, also a user of alcohol and other drugs, carried the weight of a grief, an unelaborated loss.

There are, however, two levels of unconscious defence here. In one of them, the signifier *schizophrenia*, which is metaphorically condensed in the work of mourning the matriarch, undoes a symbolic dimension blocked in Melissa's body, in a symbolic and generational thread with Dodora, her mother, and her great-aunts. *Difficult* and *schizophrenic* were, in this plane, nominations of symbolic passage, a signifier operation that mobilises the drive circuit by association. However, this signifier chain does not displace the real dimension of the colonial past, updated in the threat of losing the original lands and crystallised in indelible images embedded in the urban *quilombo*, even if this threat reaches the *quilombo's* heart.

In this second and simultaneous plane, the slavery past of the elder woman, the original owner of the lands, returns in a new context, that of the legal standoff, and with a new name, *quilombo*. It carries with it a hiatus, an interval in which the drive decants what is impossible to write, encrypted, as an index of colonial malaise. Black and *quilombola* female Melissa mobilises the sign that, in this plot, drags the entire Brazilian people. As an index within a corrupted sign, it does not produce a symbolic association, as a signifier, with the colonial past of the country and this people. On the contrary, it returns to the real of the index images frozen over the prejudice against the *quilombo*, encrypted by the *gaze* object thus sutured.

What we witnessed in the psychoanalytic conversations was a breaking of a jar that spilled the drive intensity contained therein, as Cusicanqui (2021) had pointed out about the uprisings. Screaming, crying, fighting, and a deadly and disorderly drive dimension become the centre of the scene which words do not contain. The treatment of this present past of colonisation, as proposed by Moreno-Cárdenas' (2023) thesis, does not exactly imply weaving a border, but writing a new text, where before there was nothing to read and to associate. In the clinic, a rewriting of the present with an unprecedented signifier, *quilombola*, made possible a new version of history that, in turn, founded another subjective condition, and consequently a political and social one.

A condemned, proscribed, inhuman, unpronounceable and unmentionable past: the past of enslavement returns as a spectre. Its index: the black colour of the skin. Its symptom:

suffering in singular manifestations. Its silence: the ancestral pain that cannot be translated. Its means of *jouissance*: racism. Its crypt: the lost thread of history. Here we have the other level of the unrepresentable that refers neither to the unreachable dimension of the word in representing the thing, nor to the logical dimension of the impossible of the very structure of language, but to the crypt as a phantasmagorical inheritance of the colonised unconscious.

How does one explain this element? How is its impossibility of translation articulated, and how is it related to drive detention? It is not about the absence of signifier connection or of repression of a country's history, of denial or rebuttal. This psychic operation focuses on a traumatic impossible, which gains, in the countries heir to colonisation processes, as Cusicanqui (2021) and Segato (2021) found, a special mode of unconscious agency.

MEMORY, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND IMPOSSIBLE WRITINGS

Recovering briefly the way Abraham and Torok (1995) define the crypt, they theorise it as a contingency, a deviation, a singular exceptionality. It is, for them, the pathology of a mourning that encounters obstacles in its elaboration work. An orgasmic excitement would be its signal. Shame, its motivation. The secret of a criminal desire, its core. The risk of its unbearable revelation, the threat to defend it against. The crypt, finally, its defence.

The pair also notices an element absent from the scene, as a transgenerational heritage, which resists and insists on returning as a ghost or demon, as Wiltord (2019) observes. That which never gained inscription, an unheard desire, insists, even if it is not written and named. How? Would this not be a structural and indelible element in every transmission? Would what is encrypted not simply have to do with the Lacanian real that is impossible to write, but that still produces effects of *jouissance*? Would it not then simply be a common universal? Would colonial modernity, as a discourse, imprint its specificity on this unconscious defence structure? Would this be the structuring matrix of our time and our geopolitics?

Lacan says that, in the post-war context, he received three doctors from Togo—a small country located in the west of the African continent, still colonised in the 1940s–1950s—for care in Paris, which was then the capital of the colonial empire. At the time, he was surprised by the encounter with a colonised unconscious. 'It was the unconscious that they had *sold* them at the same time as the *laws of colonisation*, an exotic, regressive form of the master's discourse, in the face of capitalism, which is called imperialism' (translated from Lacan, 1992, p. 85, emphasis added).

There were not even 'traces' of the tribal uses and beliefs of their Togolese origins. Lacan was then confronted with 'things that they had *not* forgotten' (translated from Lacan, 1992, p. 85, emphasis added) and that they knew from an ethnographic or journalistic point of view. 'Their unconscious ones functioned according to the good rules of Oedipus' (translated from

Lacan, 1992, p. 85). Why does Lacan highlight this observation with astonishment? What would he be seeing there, even without unravelling it? Could we bring his testimony—one of the rare testimonies of his clinical practice—closer to what Cusicanqui and Segato also verify?

A second passage by Lacan about his own clinical practice involving some distinct ethnicity, religiosity, or culture, is a commentary on caring for a Muslim man with symptoms involving his hands. In a distinct direction from the interpretation usually attributed, in his time, to child masturbation, Lacan undertakes a discussion about the superego and its function in the symbolic construction of the symptom in the history of the subject and in relation to the history of their culture:

> This symbolic world is not limited to the subject, because it takes place in a language that is the common language, the *universal* symbolic system, insofar as it establishes its *empire* over a certain community to which the subject belongs. (Translated from Lacan, 1986, p. 227, emphasis added).

Let us keep, from this case, the universal located by language as an empire.

Lacan discusses the analysand's aversion to the Quran. In his dramatic family history, this man spent his childhood hearing the story that his father lost his job and, equated to a thief, had to have his hand cut off by Islamic law. This statement becomes precisely 'isolated' (Lacan, 1986, p. 228) from the rest of the law in a privileged way. Due to the conflict it installs, and because it is symbolically subtracted, it returns in a substitutive and symptomatic way. The individual history of a subject of the unconscious is thus written in relation to the cultural history of their people from the remains, holes, and fracture points that the superego embodies.

> A discordant statement, ignored in the law, promoted to the foreground by a traumatic event, which reduces the law to a point whose character is inadmissible, non-integrable—this is what this repetitive, blind instance is, which we usually define by the term superego. (Translated from Lacan, 1986, p. 229)

There is, however, a subtle difference between Lacan's two accounts. In the first, it is an unconscious colonised by the empire, whose foreign language forges a discourse that is sold and written against the grain as an unconscious law for everyone. In the second, the subject is immersed in a symbolic system that already operates as *universal* for him, insofar as it establishes its *empire over a certain community to which the subject belongs*. Sharing the same language, he finds himself immersed in a particularised universal, although devoted to a specific religious culture within it. The issue of language migration, especially when violently forced, is central to this difference. '[Linguistic] processes almost never eliminate something without leaving a mark: a survival' (Galindo, 2022, p. 127).

Freudian metapsychology explains these survivals of a previous inscription system present in a current one through a complex plot of relationship between the drive circuit, which always seeks satisfaction (Freud, 1915b), and the system of writing and representation of the

psychic apparatus. This plot requires an understanding of the functioning of the unconscious 'as a censored chapter' (Lacan, 1953/1998a, p. 260) for the sexualised body of a subject who seeks paths to drive satisfaction.

It is important to remember that the subject of the unconscious is the effect of a slip of language between two signifiers. In other words, the signifier (S2) that emerges to signify a first signifier (S1), produces as an effect the subject divided by this articulation that never reaches them. It is erased (*aphanisis*) by language and leaves a meaningless remainder (object *a*). The body, always *extimate to* this system, configures 'the field in which A is inscribed, this place that is the great Other' (translated from Lacan, 2008, p. 301) and that remains as radical alterity.

Therefore, the way in which the drive (as intensity) is captured by language and becomes linked to thought and action implies this peculiar system of representation that animates the sexual body of the speaker (Freud, 1915b; Lacan, 1959–1960/1991). In dealing with a phenomenon of language such as the crypt, therefore, we are simultaneously verifying a bodily event, but not in its empirical or symbolic sense. It does not happen without the external world (*Umwelt*) and its historical and geopolitical determinants, but these are found in a peculiar topology, 'since the subject is, if we may say so, in an internal exclusion to its object' (Lacan, 1965–1966/1998b, p. 875).

Let us take, then, the dimension of the impossible inherent to every function of speech. We can think of the radically unrepresentable—in Freud, *das Ding*—as that which will never be apprehended by the system of representation. It does not imply what has been repressed as written and erased from the preconscious-conscious system (*Pcs-Cs*), but as that which will never gain representation. When something is affirmed in the field of representation, it creates a void, expelled, which always remains as an intensity, a drive source. This original void, an autoerotic sexual source, reveals 'the nodal point through which the unconscious drive is linked to sexual reality' (Lacan, 1964/1998c, p. 146).

The unconscious system (*Ucs*) contains the representation of the thing (*Sachvorstellung*) which, hypercathected by the representation of the word (*Wortvorstellung*), becomes part of *the Pcs-Cs* system when it becomes the representation of the object. What is expelled, or not written in this pairing, remains outside the field of meaning, remains real. '*Sach* and *Wort* are therefore closely linked, they form a pair. *Das Ding* is something else' (translated from Lacan, 1959–1960/1991, p. 61). How is this writing forged? What does it discard? What survives? With Freud (1895), we learn that the experience of the world gains representation and existence in the psychic apparatus from losses (of satisfaction) in the processes of its inscription. The forms of unconscious inscription are three: imprinting (*Wz*), transcription (*Ub*), retranscription (*Vb-Bews*). At the level of psychic writing, with each new record:

> Subsequent transcription inhibits the previous one and removes the arousal process. When a
> subsequent transcription is missing, arousal is managed according to the psychological laws in

force in the previous period and depending on the pathways opened at that time. Thus, an anachronism persists: in a given region the 'fueros' still exist; we are in the presence of 'survivals'. (Translated from Freud, 1895, p. 326)

Figure 1. *Letter 52 (Freud, 1896, p. 325)*

W	Wz	Ub	Vb	Bews
Wahrnehmungen	*Wahrnehmungszeichen*	*Unbewusstsein*	*Vorbewusstsein*	*Bewusstsein*
(perceptions)	(register of perception)	(traces of the unconscious)	(preconsciousness)	(consciousness)
	first record	second record	third record	

We then have (1) pure perceptual intensity (*W*), (2) the unconscious trait (*Wz*) without linkage (which we can associate with the *letter* of *jouissance* in Lacan, functioning by simultaneity), (3) the unconscious trait (*Ub*) as conceptual memories (which we can already approximate to the signifier, in its phonematic value in Lacan or as a sound image in Freud), (4) the preconscious representation (or the word) (*Vb*), and (5) the structured language of consciousness (which produces meaning and signification) (*Bews*). The connection of the word representation that engenders the object representation occurs through the sound image of the word and the visual representations of the object. 'The representation of the word is indicated as a closed complex of representations, whereas the representation of the object is indicated as an open complex' (Freud, 1915c, p. 244). Hence the symbolic capacity of the apparatus, in which memory and perception-consciousness are excluded.

This is the path of ordering the drive by language, which is originally experienced in the mother language, *lalangue*, as *jouissance*. *Lalangue* serves for something other than communication: it implies the mode of occupation of the mother language, while language is what one tries to know concerning *lalangue*. If language is made of this mother language as a lucubration of *savoir*, the unconscious, in its real dimension, is a type of know-how with *lalangue* (Lacan, 1972–1973/1982). Therefore, reality is always approached with the devices of *jouissance*, articulated by language. All structured *savoir* makes the real incomplete and creates a frame of the world.

If the language of *jouissance* is always the mother tongue as Other, what would be the effects of the imposed interference of another language, when foreign, with its own sounds and rhythms, on the body and experience in colonial processes? Would its effects cease with time, or would they be transmitted or still repeated in an updated form? We address these different questions by listening to a subject or reading a social phenomenon in countries heir to colonisation processes. If we take the unconscious in its transferential, epistemic aspect, we will be closer to what is articulated as language. If we take the unconscious in its real aspect, we will be further from this language structure and closer to the language of *jouissance*.

Thus, passing on this rest not inscribed in history, which is a function of the analyst's desire (Lacan, 2005), and implies, at the level of culture, its historicised writing. The insistence with which something is repeated, since it is not remembered, is a psychic event coextensive with the functioning of the drive (Lacan, 1959–1960/1991), both with regard to what is recorded and to what is rejected or denied, erased, rebutted, or destroyed. How, finally, does the crypt fit into this logic?

## THE CRYPT IN A LACANIAN AND DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

Let us restate the difference between the defence of repression, as in the case of Lacan's Muslim analysand or the slip through the *schizophrenia* signifier in the *quilombo*, and the crypt, as something that cannot be passed onto the record of memory writing and insists, as in the case of the colonised analysers of Togo or of the dimension of the transmission of the remains of enslavement in the case of the *quilombo*. In repression, the defence operation happens by signifier substitution, by the way in which representations of the word will rearrange with the representations of the thing or unconscious traits, in the composition of the representation of the object in the return of the repressed. The quantitative aspect of the libidinal surplus originally present in the conflict that causes the repression is decisive (Freud, 1915a). The essence of repression, in neurosis, consists of removing this certain quantitatively uncomfortable content from the *Pcs-Cs* (preconscious-conscious), keeping it at a distance.

The crypt effect of colonisation structures, differently, a mode of defence that generates an inertia of the drive arousal from an obstacle within the sign itself, producing its suspension through an element that fixes the representation of the thing, where the emptiness of the object would allow its interpretant connection. There is a detention of its possibility of effectiveness within the very sign. This structural, unconscious, and colonial dimension of the crypt, not only contingent on a pathological mourning, differs from the Freudian unconscious modes of defence (denial, repression, refusal, and rejection) systematised by Lacan throughout his work. It derives from a psychoanalytic reading in a decolonial ellipse of clinical phenomena (Guerra, 2021).

Another important reference to the psychoanalytic discussion of the phantasmagoric past and its incidence in the present and the future, constructed in a decolonial and psychosocial perspective, can be found in *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmissions* (Frosh, 2018). The work utilises the idea of *haunting* to explore psychoanalytically the way in which identities, beliefs, intimate relationships, and hatreds are transmitted throughout generations and between people. He touches on the secrets we inherit, the attraction of the past, and the way in which emotions, thoughts, and impulses coming from others enter us as a kind of immaterial—though real—communication.

In Lacan, it comes from the adoption of Peirce's sign theory from the 1960s onwards. Just as he does in relation to Saussure's theory of the linguistic sign, Lacan also adopts the logical model of the Peircean—more so than the realistic—sign in his own way, shaping it to his theory of the unconscious, formulated from the category of the real and the *object a*, his inventions. For Peirce (1932; 2005), a sign, or *representamen*, is something that occupies the place of something (object) for someone, under some relationship or under some title. The created sign is the *interpretamen* of the first sign and occupies the place of the object (Figure 2).

Figure 2. *Peirce's linguistic sign*
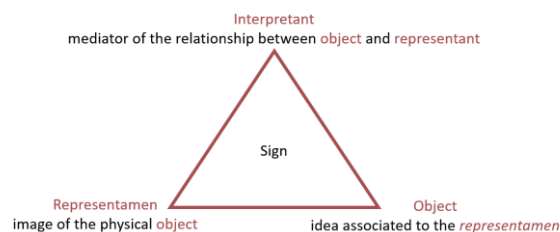
The object is thought of in a double strand. The dynamic object is the one that exists in reality and the immediate object the one represented by the *representamen*. This index links itself to the object in a causal relationship, based on the ground of this relationship, with the (*vague*) indeterminacy on the side of the *interpretant*, not of the *representamen–object* relationship. Peircian realism, therefore, is linked to an empiricist theory of representation, which sees reality as a model for determining the function of the sign (Cardoso, 2012), being thus naturalised and based on the presupposition of prior sensible knowledge of it.

Lacan introduces the Peircian sign definitively into another realism. He presents it for the first time in class on January 13, 1960, in his seminar on ethics. The sign is presented as that which returns, externalised drive affectation expelled as it first was, as a logical and constant remain, therefore denaturalised, whose positivity marks the limit of language, its indeterminacy, for the conception of the function of reality (Lacan, 1959–1960/1991). The sign in Lacan points out the inconsistency in the very registration of the symbolic. 'This is not a limitation of language understood as an instrument of mediation, but of the ontologically contradictory nature of the very determination of the real' (translated from Cardoso, 2012, p. 175).

The sign designates the very presence of structural indeterminacy, breaking the Peircian causality between *representamen* and object. For Lacan (1971–1972), there is no other *representamen* than the object *a*, a limit internal to the symbolic, an inconsistency internal to the universe of language. The dynamic object is taken in Peirce as *das Ding* and in Lacan as a regulatory idea, presupposed as a condition of possibility of the symbolic itself—the effect of

the object *a* as *representamen* and not its cause (Cardoso, 2012, p. 176). The real as *reference* and object *a* as *representamen* thus introduce the concept of sign in Lacanian realism.

'The sign is the symbolic One that marks the presence of the unrepresentable within the representation, not as a qualitatively sensitive form itself, but as a demand for the symbolisation or capture of *jouissance*' (Cardoso, 2012, p. 177). Here, the crypt can finally be understood as an obstacle to symbolisation by the violent interposition of another foreign mother tongue of *jouissance*. It disarticulates the possibility of some impression of the lived being written in the translation apparatus, reducing the experience to the reiterated return to the real (dynamic object in Peirce or reference in Lacan). This is because the *representamen*, as an object *a*, the logical condition of signification, is sutured by this other language, as an interpretation that deactivates the sign capacity of representation that would link it to the object, producing the slip of signification and of drive. Its drive effect iteratively returns on the body as dissociation and fixity, and its remains are not collected by fantasy, but hover as hauntings not integrable by the system.

Thus, the linguistic migration forced and violently imposed by the colonial processes of enslavement produces a sign corruption. However, it holds and forges a cryptic structure that contains the original mother tongue of *jouissance*, stopping its alive and mobile drive intensity from moving for interpretation, detaining it inside the sign crypt itself, surrounded by the shell of imperial language, and producing its effects on the body. There would be no first impression of the drive, due to this forced external migration.

Hence why, when the crypt is touched, its deadly drive return is always so exacerbated and delocalised. The casing of the imperial language distorts what is experienced and stagnates, burying it alive, the very experience of *jouissance*, imprisoned as an index under its domain. Thus, its return effects gain singular dramas as bodily events and related phantasmagoria, on the one hand, and freeze in *jouissance* indexes on the images that evoke its mark, on the other.

This is what Lacan verifies in his patients from Togo, Cusicanqui (2021) in what remains buried in postcolonial life, and Segato (2020) in the oedipal crypt of the Brazilian maternal duality. It is what Fanon had also already verified as a theoretical inadequacy of the classic conceptual schemes of psychoanalysis for the colonised. With the Antillean Black colonised person, there is a myth to be faced, which is awakened by the racialised gaze of the white on the weight of their melanin. He conceives racism on at least three levels: phenotypic, linguistic, and introjective. 'The Antillean [if he goes to Europe] must then choose between his family and European society' (translated from Fanon, 2018, p. 133). This drama, lived in daylight, repeated, does not have time to be 'unconscientised' (Fanon, 2008). Or, as Lacan had formulated: 'Their unconscious was not that of their childhood memories—this was palpable—but their childhood was retroactively lived in our family categories' (Lacan, 1992, p. 85).

The issue is not exactly a lack of time to unconscientise the traumatic experience of colonial devastation, but the structural signic impossibility of structure, at the level of body and language, to write the deadly drive, arising from the imposition of imperialist *jouissance* in its linguistic-political-drive capture. Its return as a memory (Moreno-Cárdenas, 2023) would be, at the same time, an effect of and openness to the psychoanalyst's clinical work.

FINALLY, TO NOT BACK DOWN IN THE FACE OF POLITICS

Let us return to the clinical scene of the *quilombo*. Starting from the *schizophrenia* diagnosis, the patient could work the signifier, the *jouissance*, and the crypt in at least three dimensions. Firstly, she unidentifies herself from her mother, who had received the same diagnosis—with both being seen as the 'rebels' of the *quilombo*. Along this line, the identification with her mother's 'rebelliousness' names a way to enjoy the alcohol abuse in the singular plane of a body which enjoys. Both this identification and the *jouissance* correlated to it collapse.

Secondly, she is diagnosed, as her grandmother and great-aunt before her, as 'schizophrenic'. This diagnosis, which she associates with her ancestors, breaks a transgenerational pact of silence over these women, through which the lines of affection and jealousy, of resentment and anger, emerge abruptly. Through its being named by classical psychiatry, the signifier 'schizophrenia' allows, in a metonymic slip, the transgenerational work of mourning and of writing a new symbolic belonging.

However, it is in the third axis of symptomatic overdetermination that the crypt manifests itself. As an index of colonial *malaise*, this woman enunciates with her symptoms the incidence of neocolonial violence. These *quilombolas* were legally threatened to lose their lands, being invaded by the police to be evicted from their properties. The violent scene of five police vehicles, cornering the residents and attempting to expel them from their properties, updates, repeats, and freezes an immemorial past—until then without translation—modelled after the exploitation colonialism which characterised the occupation of Brazilian lands. This is a frozen and updated traumatic scene that could finally gain drive movement.

The living of *jouissance*, blocked by the colonial crypt, is an effect of imperialism, as a colonial discourse that sells and founds the signic dam based on a supposed universal and univocal history—S1 of the colonial master's discourse (Guerra, 2022)—which wishes to domesticate and normalise the body of *jouissance* in the neocolonial fabric. However, it is always left to the subject, like Melissa, to consent or not to consent, to violate the code and crack, break, shatter the crypt. To write other names from their remains, to invent new arrangements for the social bond.

From the perspective of psychoanalytic listening, taking into account the always colonised dimension of the unconscious avoids its reification, as well as the entification of the Other, and also sets in motion its double effect—subjective and political—on track for continuation. The clinical value of the crypt, notably the incidence of the drive dimension in the political phenomenon, as that which does not give way, reintroduces the body and the subject excluded by modern rationality. The psychoanalyst, thus engaged, is not outside the structure, but must position themselves to operate from it without suturing its opening conditions.

Its intense drive effect can then gain movement in the body and language. 'The psychoanalyst corrects the *hybris* with a certainty: that none of his peers will dive into this opening and, therefore, that he himself will know how to remain on the edge' (translated from Lacan, 1967/2003, p. 348). A delicate and determined analytical position to sustain the fissures where truculence and brutality have become a colonising way of suturing the body of *jouissance*.

For a psychoanalyst aware of the effects of colonialism, it is no longer possible to align with the violent processes of neocolonisation or to cover the circuit of *jouissance* in clinical practice with the same veil of colonialising imperialist obscenity related to it. Not retreating from politics may be, today, a sign indicating the path for the psychoanalyst.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

African diaspora, interlanguages, and the unconscious

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Ana Maria Gonçalves' novel *Um Defeito de Cor* (*A Colour Defect*), published in 2006; a fiction intertwined with history, memory, languages, and cultures of black Africans brought to Brazil, and describing mainly Salvador in the mid-19th century, developed within the gaps of the limited historical records of enslaved people. It analyses the subjective experiences of the protagonist, Kehinde, as she navigates multiple languages and cultures. It explores the unconscious impacts of exposure to a plurality of languages, informed by Lélia Gonzalez's concept of 'Pretoguês', which highlights the influence of African languages on Portuguese.

KEYWORDS: African diaspora; interlanguages; identity; unconscious

Ana Maria Gonçalves' book *Um Defeito de Cor* (*A Colour Defect*), published in 2006, was written based on the gaps found in the biography of Luiz Gama. It is a fiction intertwined with history, memory, languages, and cultures of black Africans brought to Brazil, describing mainly Salvador in the mid-19th century.

In an interview on the show *Roda Viva*, the author describes her work as being of the order of 'escrevivência' or 'oraliture', given the scarcity of records on the history of enslaved people in Brazil. Such a history can only be told through vestiges.

Given the richness of content emerging from the encounter with the book, various possibilities for commentary opened up during the reading. We could have made the book dialogue with Gilroy's (2001) perspective, which deconstructs ideas of racial purity and national identities rooted on land by considering the Black Atlantic and the languages that became itinerant therein, which gave rise to more fluid and less fixed cultures (Gilroy, 2001).

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We could have read it with Bhabha, who highlights hybrid, trans-local, and intercultural identification processes, given that Ana Maria Gonçalves describes 18th century Salvador with a population, languages, and cultures in constant dialogue with one another.

We could have linked the book with the issue of the identity of the enslaved individuals returned to the African continent (Cunha, 1985) since it narrates the story of a child kidnapped in Africa, enslaved in Brazil, only to return to the continent of origin and assume a differentiated status due to the use of Brazilian techniques and customs taken back to Africa.

However, it was decided to focus on the subjective effects of the character's exposure to diverse languages and cultures.

In the book, we witness the main character, Kehinde, undergoing processes of identification and vacillation of identifications—sometimes in the register of idealisation and sometimes in the register of abjection—as she experiences transformative encounters with otherness and the languages she hears, learns, and speaks.

It is interesting to follow her in constructing a coherence for the words that mark her and for the memories carved from traumatic events, from experiences with the familiar and the strange, from the intercultural and plurilingual context of the African diaspora.

Thus, from Kehinde's trajectory, we seek to raise questions about possible incidences in the unconscious due to exposure to a plurality of languages that constitute the subject. We emphasise that we could only formulate such a question based on the notion of 'Pretoguês', coined by Lélia Gonzalez to refer to the influence of African-origin languages on Portuguese (Gonzalez, 1984). ('Pretoguês' is a play on the words 'preto' [black] and 'português' [Portuguese].)

PLURIAFRICA, MULTILANGUAGES, AND *PRETOGUÊS*

Africa, as a plural continent with a diversity of tribes, ethnicities, and languages, is portrayed in *Um Defeito de Cor* as the starting point of Kehinde's story.

As far as Kehinde remembers, her story begins in Savalu, where she experiences a traumatic encounter with sex and death when warriors of King Adandozan invade her home.

In this scene, the warriors, recognising symbols of Dan on the grandmother's carpet and the wall, associated the family with Agotimé, one of the queens of Dahomey, accused of witchcraft and sold as a slave. For this reason, they violate Kehinde, her sister, and their mother. Also, they brutally murder her mother and her brother, motivated by political and divine rivalries stimulated by the symbols of Dan.

The encounter with the warriors is an encounter with the most radical otherness. It connects the following elements: differences in languages, culture, and religiosity, besides sex and death (figures of the real in a relationship of *extimacy* with language).

These elements reemerge throughout the narrative in different situations, permeated by violence and the issue of race, determining subjective mutations of the character.

The next day after the attack, the grandmother, accompanied by her granddaughters, leaves the family house and heads to Ouidah on the coast in search of an unfathomable destiny. On the road, they encounter people wearing unfamiliar clothes, haircuts, tribe marks, and paintings. In Ouidah, Kehinde meets people from different parts of Africa, speakers of other languages, people wearing hats with feathers, traders, and white settlers in the city. She encounters new objects, such as tables and chairs, copied from abroad. All this gives her the impression of being born in another era, in a different place.

The initial passage of the book is vital to dissolve any idea of a unified Africa. Before being captured and sent to Brazil, Kehinde had already encountered the unfamiliar, other races, other religions, and other languages than those of her family nucleus. Kidnapped in Ouidah, the two sisters are followed by their grandmother. Imprisoned and enslaved, they make the crossing not only of the Atlantic but also of the horror of traveling in inhumane conditions.

On the ship, several languages were spoken, and often, communication was made through gestures, as some people did not understand each other. On board were Europeans, Jejes, Fons, Hausas, Igbos, Fulanis, Mais, Popos, Tapas, Ashantis, and Egbas.

Alufas, who greeted others with a 'salamaleco' (a corruption of the Arabic Salam Alaykum), were heading to Mecca for prayer time. There, Kehinde learned that God could be called by several names: Ala, Olorun, God, or Zambi.

In Brazil, after being purchased by Mr. José Carlos, Kehinde was forbidden to speak in her native language, black language, and was forced to communicate in Portuguese. Later, she learned to write with Fantubi, the tutor of the young lady Maria Clara, whom Kehinde was obliged to accompany, even in her classes. Fantubi was a *muçumirim*, an Islamised African, who secretly taught Kehinde the art of reading and writing. Literacy in Portuguese allowed her to leave the realm of orality and access the register of writing, enabling various subjective and relational experiences.

At one point in the narrative, Kehinde was given to English masters with whom she learned the English language and the preparation of cookies, skills she later used to secure her freedom and in her romantic encounter with the man with whom she generated her only offspring. At another point in the story, Kehinde had contact with the French language when she settled in São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro.

With the summary of part of the book *Um Defeito de Cor*, we hope to have exposed the heterogeneity and richness of languages and cultures through which Kehinde transited, sometimes coercively, but also guided by her interests.

It is interesting to note that some words are presented in the writer's narrative without translation due to the impossibility of finding an accurate meaning in Portuguese. The author keeps them in their original form and adds footnotes for clarification.

Languages are systematic sets of signifiers. They embody culture, values, beliefs, practices, and structure relationships with reality and otherness. They are not static or fixed but continuous processes of construction, as humans penetrate and are penetrated by them. They are inseparable from the speaking beings and accompany them in all their acts. They are networks of connections between subjects and between the subject and the Other. The relationship between language, culture, otherness, and the unconscious is intrinsic, involving a continuous back-and-forth between words and things, between words and meanings, between signifiers that refer to other signifiers, and also between signifiers and the real.

The contact between the Portuguese and African languages not only occurred during the slave trade but for at least five centuries (from the 15th century to the mid-20th century). If the seeds of African languages brought to Brazil germinated quickly in the exchanges made by the character, it was because there were already favourable conditions for such. Linguistic and cultural exchanges between Ouidah and Portugal were made long before Kehinde arrived in Brazil (Fiorin & Petter, 2014).

The fact is that the traffic of people practiced by the Portuguese influenced some African languages and modified the linguistic status of others. The relationship between the cycles of slave importation and economic reasons determined a series of linguistic adaptations to the spaces and events and determined a fluid and changeable character of the languages spoken in the Black Atlantic (Fiorin & Petter, 2014).

This type of trade determined the creation of more and more permanent, fixed, and organised places of embarkation and slave depots with the aim of completing the ships' cargoes. One of these places was the fort described by Kehinde in Ouidah, where people captured in many places in Africa arrived speaking diverse languages and giving various versions about the destiny that awaited them. It can be said that this particular organisation of the slave trade created favourable conditions to the emergence of a transitional and renewable linguistic situation for the enslaved (Fiorin & Petter, 2014).

Kehinde experienced a forced and prolonged concentration of speakers of different languages, which, uprooted from their niche, underwent various morphological, phonological, semantic, and dialogical modifications and ruptures. She experienced a code-switching in which the Portuguese language served as a reference pole. Along her journey, she encountered forms analogous yet not identical to the heritage transmitted by her

grandmother in the use of speech and in the cults of African origin. This is because, in the *terreiros* of Salvador, different African oral traditions and ritualised speech coexist in songs, narratives, tales, and proverbs, already mixed with Portuguese.

It could be argued that the signifier and signified of words were modified in the unfolding of Kehinde's story, as they no longer described reality as in her language of origin.

At times, there were no referents for specific words from her native language in the new realities. In addition, objects, sensations, affects, and different notions received new denominations. However, it is not just a matter of taking the perspective of correspondence between words and things but rather the perspective of the unconscious, where signifiers combine according to the laws of metaphor and metonymy.

That is, it is a matter of asking if we find the effects of learning these different languages and cultures in the register of interpretations of the unconscious itself. We consider that the formations of the unconscious are linguistically structured interpretations of the subject's drive experiences linked to the otherness; consequently, the variation of languages must have effects on the structuring of the unconscious or on the signifier chain on dreams, symptoms, and slips.

Furthermore, we question whether there may have been changes in the relations between signifiers and signifiers, signifiers and signified, and signifiers and *object a*, in the formations of the unconscious of this subject.

Kehinde, throughout the book, narrates several dreams. In the narratives, it is possible to verify the incidence of signifiers of new languages learned in the diachrony and synchrony of the unconscious signifier chain, producing the advent of new meanings, interpretations, and new denominations of the real.

CONCLUSION

To advance in the elaboration of responses to these questions, we should revisit the definitions of language, speech, and language in Lacan's (1953/1966) text 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis'.

In the mentioned text, Lacan defines language (*langue*) as the set of signifiers, language as the singular use that a subject makes of language (Langue), and speech—which is inserted in a field ordered and limited by language—as what the subject addresses to the Other, demanding recognition.

While Lacan draws inspiration from Saussure (1916/2006) to define language, his definition of speech is impregnated with Hegel's (1807/1998) thought. Yet, for Lacan, when speaking, the subject addresses the Other with the intention of signification. Thus, we see

here a presentation of the dialectic of meaning, which evidently is no longer precisely Hegelian.

Thus, we wonder how the plurality of languages and the subject's relationships with otherness, that is, with the Other, affect language, speech, and the organisation of the structure of the unconscious of a subject, in our case, of the character Kehinde.

We remember here a scene of the sale of slaves in the market of Salvador narrated in the book, in which Kehinde sought to understand the desire of the white masters to be able to express what would make her a desirable purchase object. We also recall the situation in which the character, having her first meal in the kitchen of Mr. José Carlos, is surprised by the prohibition of speaking her language and faces several objects and codes of conduct unknown to her and which she cannot name. We also highlight the moment when Kehinde is offered to the young lady as a toy and, assaulted by muteness, tries to guess what to say and how to act.

There are also occasions when Kehinde does not face desire but the enjoyment of the Other, in situations such as when she is thrown onto the slave ship, when her master rapes her, or when she witnesses her lover being tortured by the same master to be subsequently castrated.

These are all situations in which Kehinde is confronted not with desire but with the sadistic enjoyment of the Other, which refers back to the sadistic enjoyment of King Adandozan's warriors, reducing her to a place of pure anguish.

In all these moments, Kehinde does not know how to situate herself. The desire of the Other appears as an enigma, and enjoyment appears in its opacity and resistance to being translated into symbolic order.

Concluding the work indicating that the reading of *Um Defeito de Cor*, given the circumstances above—the overlapping otherness, the imposed plurality of languages, codes, and linguistic references, the impossibility of using the native language, the violent imposition of learning the language of the Other, of interpreting his desire, of naming his enjoyment (as well as her own)—situates the subject in a peculiar position.

There is something specific when Kehinde seeks to relocate her desire in the face of the enjoyment or desire of the colonisers from the language she does not know. The question 'Che vuoi?' or 'What do you want?' sought by Lacan in Goethe's *Faust*, posed to every neurotic subject, assumes another weight and measure for the enslaved kidnapped and brought to São Salvador da Bahia. There is something beyond the structuring question posed to the neurotic here. The violence that permeates the question, the accentuation of the experience with otherness due to a lack of understanding of social codes and spoken language plunges the subject into a situation of even greater helplessness.

Regarding the subject's responses to the Other, including the interpretations of the unconscious there is also something specific. If, for Lacan, the dream and any formation of the unconscious have the structure of a sentence, of a *rebus*, we can consider that in this case we face a plurilingual subject that composes plurilingual sentences.

If the unconscious is the discourse of the Other—structured eccentrically to the subject— the status of this Other presents an extremely radical alterity being structured from a multiplicity of languages often renew.

Finally, it would be interesting to verify in the clinic with subjects of the black diaspora to what extent Lacanian linguistics is powerful enough to shed light on their experiences of the unconscious or, conversely, to see if the experiences of the unconscious of these diasporic subjects can make us look at this issue with another eye.

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PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Colonisation and language: From imprisonment by the colonial language to subversion through *lalangue*

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes an approach between psychoanalysis and decolonial thinking to reflect upon the psychic effects of the process of banning the use and subsequent extinction of the mother languages of original and diasporic peoples in places marked by assimilationist colonisation policies and possible resistance strategies, given this specific type of colonial violence. Starting from the Lacanian premise that the unconscious is structured like a language, we seek to investigate the psychic consequences of the erasure of thousands of original languages from diasporic peoples and the imposition of a Western monolanguage. Then, through Lacan's final teaching and the concept of *lalangue*, we observe, in a singular field, through a clinical vignette, the invention of the unconscious subject as a response to language colonisation.

KEYWORDS: psychoanalysis; language; coloniality; *lalangue*

The absolute centrality of colonisation as an enterprise of massive alienation and material violence against subjects, their bodies, and their lands should come as no surprise. It redefined what is understood as human, and radically and definitively impacted global geopolitical configuration. In spite of that, we can state that its effects on subjectivity were only marginally touched upon by the fields of social sciences, psychology, and the canons of psychoanalysis. The significant majority of Western knowledge production, as well as all means of treatment of mental suffering were based on the social bonds of the metropolis (Dussel, 2005). However, due to the magnitude of the process in question, the social bonds in the colony are treated differently in the metropolis. People suffer in the colony differently

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from how they suffer in the metropolis. Additionally, it is from the social bond, and therefore from language, that this article proposes a brief reflection on the impacts of forced linguistic migration process (Guerra, 2023) in territories marked by assimilationist colonisation policies, as well as possible strategies of political and subjective resistance in the face of this manner of colonial violence.

Since the turn of the 21st century, it has been clear to see that intersectional feminist theories, queer theories, and cultural and decolonial studies have brought new questions to the field of psychoanalysis, prompting deeper and more incisive reflections on the relations between psychic suffering and colonisation. Thus, the work of precursors of the theme, such as Franz Fanon, Lélia Gonzalez, Neusa dos Santos Souza, and others, began to resurface at the hands of new scholars, in order to investigate the particular dimension (Guerra, 2021) of forms of power and exploitation of lands invaded and subjugated by imperialist nations, and their effects on human subjectivity.

In this work we examine the effects of colonisation at the level of language. Therefore, we make use of Lacanian theory elucidated by the concepts of decolonial thought, especially the concept of Coloniality, a 'complex structure of intertwined levels', which encompasses 'controlling the economy, authority, natural resources, gender and sexuality, subjectivity and knowledge' (Mignolo, 2010, p. 12), shaped by the three-dimensional framework of Coloniality of being, of knowledge, and of power (Maldonado-Torres, 2008). As a multifactorial process—insofar as its impacts occur at the sociological, economic, linguistic, and psychic level—colonisation entailed and continues to entail a series of agglomerations of interdictions on possibilities of existence and the symbolic transformation of reality, as one of its core strategies is the erasure of the subjugated people's language and the imposition of the coloniser's language. In the specific case of Brazil, this process took place through policies enacted by the Marquis of Pombal (Lopes, 2005), which prohibited the use of hundreds of native languages, and imposed Portuguese as the father language of the colony, thus instrumentalising the annihilation of these peoples' rights. It is important to mention that the violence resulting from the process of extinction of the original peoples' languages, as well as Afrodiasporic peoples' languages, did not stop at the moment of arrival of Europeans in this territory, but has dragged on for centuries. To illustrate our premise, we use an excerpt from journalist Eliane Brum's narrative on the implementation of the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam in the municipality of Altamira, in the Xingu River region, state of Pará, which took place in 2010 and is reported in the book *Banzeiro Okòtó* (Brum, 2021):

> He was an old man. His people, Araweté. His body was dyed red with annatto. His hair in a rounded cut. And he was sitting upright, his hands around the bow and arrows in front of him. He stayed like that for almost 12 hours. He didn't eat. He didn't bend. I looked at him, but he never made eye contact with me. In front of him, indigenous leaders from several peoples affected by Belo Monte took turns at the microphone, demanding compliance with the agreements made by Norte Energia. He, like many others, did not understand the Portuguese language. Forty years prior, neither he nor his people knew something called Brazil even existed,

and it is possible that even at the present it still didn't make sense. But Old Araweté was there, under lamps, sitting on a red plastic chair, waiting for his fate to be decided in Portuguese in a place they called Brazil. What did he see? I don't know what he saw. I know what I saw. And what I saw made me find not a dimension of him, but of myself. Or of us white people. The language of Justice, as well as that of bureaucracy, with all its acronyms, is designed to make even those with a doctorate in literature illiterate. But what remains for indigenous peoples who strive to express themselves in the language of those who destroy them—and strive even while they are destroyed by that language? What is left for Old Araweté as he sits there for almost twelve hours? He has no choice, since it is with those words that his existence is annihilated…. The company controls the water in the river. How to explain that to Old Araweté, regardless of language?... It is already dawn when the meeting ends, and the leaders gather to sign yet another document in which Norte Energia and Funai commit to fulfilling what they have already failed to do so many times. Old Araweté finally moves…. Then he speaks a few words in his language, speaking to no one. (p. 248–252)

We can think of the narrative of this scene as a reenactment of the meeting between the original peoples and the European colonisers who arrived in the vast lands they agreed to name 'America', where Jesuit priests announced to the indigenous people, in Latin, the words of the so-called '*Requerimiento*' (Dussel, 1993), a document from the Catholic Church that authorised their enslavement, the annihilation of their traditions, plunder of their lands, and prohibited the use of their language, with the purpose of 'civilising' them. In this context, we can conclude that psychic suffering has a close relationship with the imposition of the language of the metropolis, which materialises both in the language itself, and in the legal texts and their terminologies that make this language inaccessible, even for those who speak it, as Andréa Guerra (2023) explains, in the article 'Crypt: the colonized unconscious':

How could there be no unconscious fallout from colonization, if the unconscious is structured exactly like a language, and its structure is what tries to constitute knowledge about *lalangue*, the mother of jouissance? How could there be no effects of jouissance, if the violent imposition of foreign languages on original languages and the annihilation of the humanity of different African peoples and ethnicities are the constitutive basis of modernity? (p. 96)

As we propose to reflect on the effects of this process from a psychoanalytic angle at a language level, in this first section we shall use the Lacanian conception of subject as an effect of the signifier (Lacan, 1998/1957). During the period known as the return to Freud, Lacan was grappling with overcoming the individualistic notion of the unconscious to reformulate it from a social dimension, strongly influenced by the structuralist movement. At this point in Lacanian theory, the subjective constitution depends essentially on the subject's relationship with language, with what is transmitted to him by the Other. The notion of the big Other—or just the Other, with a capital 'O'—differs from the fellow man, the small other, the empirical other, which, precisely due to its similarity, could not radically represent that which is not identical. The Other would be equivalent to a symbolic ordering, a system of rules that shapes social relations, a structural place that represents the radical otherness that is language: 'you must understand that already at the most radical level, in so far as once you speak to someone

there is an other Other in him, *qua* subject of the code' (Lacan, 1973–1974/2008b, p. 155). Thus, the constitution of the subject—which differs from the self, insofar as it is constituted in the imaginary field—takes place in the symbolic field, the field of the Other, of language, 'the locus in which is situated the chain of the signifier that governs whatever may be made present of the subject—it is the field of that living being in which the subject has to appear' (Lacan, 1964/2008a, p. 193–194). In Seminar XI, 'The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis', this proposal is formalised through the processes of alienation and separation, which Lacan illustrates with his set theory. His intention with the representation of sets is to demonstrate the dialectic of the establishment of the subject in his relationship with the Other through circular, asymmetric, and non-reciprocal processes. This refers to the simultaneous relationship of dependence and independence—inspired by Hegel's phenomenology of spirit—of the subject in relation to the signifier. To emerge as such, the subject needs to resort to the Other, which is the field of meaning. Opting for meaning, he loses his being, and, opting for being, he remains excluded from the symbolic order and outside the social web. The advent of the subject therefore implies a loss, more specifically a loss of meaning that fractures the being. In this sense, the divided subject is not ontological, it is not an entity that can be defined and grasped, but it is represented by signifiers.

What happens in a colonial context, through the suppression of the original language and the imposition of the language of the metropolis, is the coloniser asserting himself as holder of the symbolic order. The symbolic universe imposed by the coloniser constitutes a network of signifiers that traps the colonised in a universality and abolishes difference, creating a fictional and fixed place for the colonised through the invention of the category of race (Mbembe, 2013). In this way, the signifiers 'black' and 'Indian' depose the colonised from his own condition as a subject, as is made evident in the following passage from the work 'Black skin, white masks':

> Because black people no longer have to be black, but rather to be black in front of white people. Some will get it into their heads to remind us that the situation has a double meaning. We respond that it is not true. In the eyes of white people, black people have no ontological resistance. Overnight, black people had to find their bearings before two systems of reference. Their metaphysics, or less pretentiously, their customs and frames of reference were abolished because they were in contradiction with a civilization they did not know and which was imposed on them. (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 104)

Thus, we can understand race as a fictional element and signifier from which the course of Latin American history unfolds, which functions as a social marker to legitimise relations of domination. We understand that this operation is one of the expressions of the Coloniality of being, as this dimension of Coloniality refers to the 'lived experience of colonization and its impact on language' (Maldonado-Torres, 2008, p. 127). When creating the words 'Indian', 'black', and others, to designate the colonised, what is at stake is an operation inverse to the subjective constitution. Now, if it is through access to the symbolic order that the subject emerges as an effect of the signifier, always escaping a fixed meaning since language is

ambiguous, in the colonial context, the symbolic operation precisely designates a fixed place for one who is taken as an object, enclosing it in a rigid signification. In the colonial context, the symbolic reduces the colonised to a mere biological body, exploitable and disposable, a true 'currency-man', as noted by Achille Mbembe (2013) in 'Crítica da Razão Negra'. Thus, we understand this process as a kind of subjective destitution. In order to illustrate our proposition, we once again turn to Franz Fanon (1952/2008) and his work 'Black skin, white masks', which, despite addressing colonisation in Martinique and Algeria, proves all the more accurate for the continuity of our investigation, since the colonial process in these countries, as well as in Brazil, was marked by assimilationist policies (Betts, 2010):

> Look, a black! It's cold, the black man trembles, the black man trembles because he feels cold, the boy trembles because he is afraid of the black man, the black man trembles with cold, a cold that bites his bones, the pretty boy trembles because he thinks the black man is shaking with anger, the white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: mommy, the black man is going to eat me! Pay him no mind, monsieur, he doesn't know that you are as civilized as we are…. In the vicinity of the white, high up the heavens dismantle, beneath my feet the earth breaks, under a white, white song. All this whiteness that chars me… 'Mommy, look at the black man, I fear him!' Fear! Fear! And they would begin to fear me. I wanted to laugh until I suffocated but that became impossible. (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 105)

This excerpt narrates an experience lived by the author in France, where he is surprised by the exclamation of a child who is shocked to see him. Fanon's laughter is an evasive response to a reaction that stems from pointing out of an insurmountable difference that operates on the imaginary axis and that, as pointed out by Lacan, depends on the enunciation of the other who finds an identity for the subject. What we intend to emphasise here is that the colonised are surprised to discover that black is a signifier linked to the meaning of bestialisation, and that this imaginary trait indicates the destitution of their condition as a subject. At this point, it is worth highlighting that the psychoanalytic understanding of the subject as an effect of language does not vary depending on the language, place, or historical moment. The alienation of the colonised to the language imposed by the coloniser does not imply a reconstitution of the subject, since the alienation to the signifiers of their culture, of their original language, has already occurred. However, one cannot ignore that racial segregation caused by colonisation and its effects on language not only persists, but is magnified by the rise of the far right that we see around the world today, which brings specificities that need to be taken into consideration to elevate the discussion of deserved dignity, for, as Lacan reminded us in 1957, race is discourse in action.

It is essential to consider that in a colonial context the process of racialisation occurs from the epidermisation of inferiority (Fanon, 1952/2008) based on phenotype, that is, the skin, hair, and other physical traits of the original and Afrodiasporic peoples who are seen as aversive by Europeans who brand them inferior, highlighting how the body proves to be fundamental to the issue. Here it must be mentioned that Lacanian theory considers alterity as a fundamental condition for the formation of the imaginary self, as constituting the unity

of the body demands mobilising the signifier that unifies the image. In other words, the incidence of the imaginary does not occur without a subject that utters the word that names the image in the mirror. The names attributed by the coloniser through imaginary categorisation gives rise to a central problem within the scope of the ideal self and the symbolic value of the body image apprehended after the mirror stage, resulting from a disjunction between the mirror image and the reality of the colonised person's body. Since the self is constituted through the gaze of the other, who provides a horizon of possible identifications, we can conclude that, for colonised subjects, the ideal self is subjected to a peculiar tension, to the extent that this horizon of identifications is reduced due to the process of domination and the establishment of the coloniser's so-called civilising values, precluding them from occupying social positions made exclusive to white-skinned individuals. Neusa dos Santos Souza pinpoints the matter:

> The relationship between the ideal ego and the ego ideal is experienced under the sign of tension. And how can it not be so, if the superego bombards the ego with incessant demands to attain an unattainable ideal? Black people are certainly not the only ones to experience this. It is true that there is always, in every non-psychotic subject, a relationship of tension between these instances, due to a quantum of dissatisfaction resulting from the inexorable failure to achieve the desired ideal. The desired ideal is one's identity with the ideal ego, an intrapsychic formation defined as a narcissistic ideal of omnipotence forged from the model of infantile narcissism. However, there are degrees, there are varying levels of dissatisfaction. In a symbolic plane, where the neurotic behavior of relevance to us operates, these levels of frustration will be ultimately defined by the relationship between the ideal ego and the ego ideal. In the black people we are talking about, this relationship is characterized by a marked gap translated by a dramatic dissatisfaction, despite the successes achieved by the subject. (Souza, 1983/2021, p. 71)

If colonised bodies are bathed in hegemonic colonial language, it is fair to conclude that there is a restriction on the ideal elements that this language imposes, as Davi Kopenawa states poignantly: 'I said to myself: "Why not imitate white people and become one of them?" I only wanted one thing: to look like them. That's why I watched them all the time in silence, with great attention. I wanted to assimilate everything they said and did' (Kopenawa & Albert, 2021, p. 283). Therein lies a radicality where existence equals resistance. For the colonised, to exist is to resist, as Aílton Krenak (2018) warns us: 'The ideological falsification that suggests that we have peace is to keep the thing working. We are at war. There is no peace anywhere. We are constantly at war.'

Here it is essential to move on to this article's second thesis, which is to investigate the modes of resistance in the face of the anguish that affects the body of the colonised. To do so, we resort to Lacan's final teaching, which highlights the relationship between body, jouissance, and drive, as the drive lies at the boundary between the somatic and the psychic. It is thus possible to think of a body-jouissance that is not necessarily governed by the specular dimension articulated by the naming of the Other, in the manner of the father and Oedipus.

The subject, in this new conception, is not just structured from S1–S2. It is here that Lacan coins the term '*parlêtre*', a neologism first utilised in Seminary XXIII: The Sinthome.

Parlêtre is an amalgamation of the French words '*parlar*' (to speak) and '*être*' (to be), a concept which centrally places the speaking being within the reality of the body. It becomes a being that constitutes itself through speech, its body permanently marked by the excesses, flaws, and limitations of language. The notion of *parlêtre*, frequently translated into English as 'speaking-being', is correlated to Freud's concept of the unconscious and Lacan's other name for the unconscious subject, as can be seen in the following passage from Seminar XXIII:

> It is in as much that in the subject which is supported by the *parlêtre* in the sense that this is what I designate as being the unconscious, there is—and it is in this field that phallic enjoyment is inscribed—there is the power, the power in short summoned, supported, the power of marrying what is involved in a certain enjoyment which, by the fact, by the fact of this word itself, marries an enjoyment experienced, experienced by the fact of the *parlêtre*, as a parasitic enjoyment, and which is the one described as of the phallus. (Lacan, 1975–1976/2007, p. 55)

It is here that Lacan emphasises the dimension of the Real, including the body and jouissance in the conception of the subject as a being of language, thus going beyond the notion of the subject as a mere effect of the signifier. Therefore, the *parlêtre* uses the body for support, granting consistency to the speaking being:

> The *parlêtre* adores his body because he believes that he has it. In reality, he doesn't, but his body is his only consistency—his only mental consistency, you understand—because his body will clear off at any moment… The body doesn't evaporate. It is consistent. (Lacan, 1975–1976/2007, p. 64)

The notion of *parlêtre* allows us to consider other possible inventions in the articulation between Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary that lie beyond the paradigm of phallic jouissance, or that are not governed by it. The main consequence that can be extracted from this concept is that a subject arises not only from the articulation between signifiers, but from the unspeakable relationship with jouissance—S1a. If the subject undergoes a process of signification, the *parlêtre*, in turn, is crossed by the embodiment of the signifier. A swarm of S1, without necessarily being linked to S2, is independent of meaning or has the effect of meaning, produces jouissance, without a phallic anchoring being the *sine qua non* condition for its emergence. In a similar vein, Lacan introduces the concept of *lalangue* in Seminar XX.

Lalangue is a swarm of S1s. S1, in turn, is pronounced in French in a way that is homophonous to the word '*essaim*', or 'swarm' in English. In this novel conception, the unconscious is a know-how of *lalangue*. As an example, we can mention clinical autism, where it is not uncommon to recognise a child due to a sound it emits repeatedly, senselessly. The emission of this sound is something that pinpoints the jouissance of the subject and allows us to hear the *parlêtre*, without, however, starting with the phallic sense. The way that child produces a message that is not filtered through the language of the Other can be seen as

something unique and singular. Therefore, *lalangue* is neither beyond nor beneath language, but it is rather the way the unconscious presents itself, not necessarily through a surge of repression, which is something tied to the Name of the Father.

In Seminar XXIII, Lacan states:

Lalangue is what allows that the '*voeu*' [wish]—desire—is also the '*veut*' [he wants] of *vouloir* [to want]—third person indicative, this is not considered a coincidence; that the '*non*' [no] negates and the '*nom*' [name] nominates, neither is this a coincidence; that the '*d'eux*' [of them]—a d-apostrophe before this '*eux*' designating those of whom we speak—is the same thing as the numeral 2 [*deux*], this here is not pure chance, nor is it arbitrary, as Saussure said.

What you must notice here is the deposit, the alluvium, the petrification, which indicates the exercise, by a group, of its unconscious experience. (Lacan, 1973–1974/2008b, p. 189)

Here the expression 'alluvium' means a type of landform created by the deposition of loose waterborne sediments. The term reveals itself to be completely relevant when we consider that the remains of a tongue, prior to language and left by other speakers, are deposited in the body, in the *parlêtre*. Thus, *lalangue* concerns what is not useful for communication, that is, outside the articulated signifier and concerning the pure instinctual body, which is located between the somatic and the psychic. What is at stake here is not a father language in which a meaning is shared, but rather a linguistic fragment that the *parlêtre* extracts from a language spoken by others, including those from previous generations, which lends itself to jouissance and not communication. Our thesis is that in this scope of *lalangue*, which is present both in the formations of the repressed unconscious, and in the elementary phenomena of psychosis and in the symptoms of autism, when examined in a colonial context, there remains a trace that can be heard, one that is not wholly smothered by the coloniser's language, and surfaces by means of equivocation.

Although the colonial enterprise tried in every way to erase the languages of the original peoples, by way of the prohibition and criminalisation of their use, there remains a trace of this native tongue, a trace that is not completely smothered by the language of the coloniser, something Lélia Gonzales (1984) tackles in her text 'Racism and sexism in Brazilian culture'. Despite the processes of extinction of original languages, and state policies that, justified by scientific racism or social Darwinism, sought to erase black and indigenous traits from Brazilian subjectivity, there is something that persists at the level of language, named by the author as the '*Pretuguês*' (loosely translated as 'Blackguese'):

And suddenly they ignore that the presence of that 'R', where the 'L' should be, is nothing more than the linguistic mark of an African language, in which the 'L' does not exist. Who, then, is the ignorant one? At the same time, they find the so-called Brazilian speech to be awesome, which eliminated the 'R's from verbal infinitives, which condenses *você* [you] into '*cê*', *está* [is] em 'tá', and so on. They don't realize they're speaking Blackguese. (Gonzales, 1984, p. 238)

The fusion of the various languages spoken by Afrodiasporic and native individuals, stuck in their slave quarters, results in a mixture of dialects, languages, mannerisms, and prosodies, which preceded a full elimination by the Portuguese language, and also imprints its marks upon the non-white bodies inhabiting the Brazilian colony. This mixture is that which constitutes *lalangue*, the stuff of dreams, slips, lapses, and neurotic symptoms; that which surfaces in hallucinations, and psychotic deliriums, as well as in the repetitive sounds of the autistic; that which, in a colonial context, has a social dimension, and contains the colonised peoples' ancestral linguistic traces that pass orally from generation to generation.

Lalangue, which is singular to the symptom produced by each *parlêtre* as a means of resisting repression, thus showing the father's failure in his attempts to censor desire and regulate jouissance, is also present in cultural manifestations and has crossed centuries, a glimpse of a people's resistance.

In Lacanian theory, *lalangue* is stated to be a language's sedimentary deposit upon the *parlêtre*'s body. In the upcoming clinical vignette, we shall see that the patient creates a type of linguistic mosaic—African, American, Indigenous—thus opposing the 'black' signifier attributed to a single signified, a sign of the coloniser's jouissance as they imprint the mark of a fixed location upon the colonised person's body, making them an object-detritus.

Although we can utilise psychoanalytic concepts to undertake a social investigation, listening to each subject's singularity is the core of the psychoanalytic experience, as the Freudian invention has its genesis in listening to his hysterical patients' suffering. It is from producing a listening that confronts the analysand with the radicality of their desire that theory can be created. The advances of Lacanian theory in relation to Freud's discovery also stem from clinical practice, because, as Lacan (1976) stated during his conferences in the United States of America: 'it is from my analysands that I learn everything, that I learn what psychoanalysis is' (p. 34). If Freud founded psychoanalysis through listening to hysterics and formulated his theory on the clinical treatments of neurotics and psychotics, Lacan immersed himself in the artisanal invention of language in psychosis. In opposition to the objectification inherent to this structure, we observe in some cases a unique weaving that addresses the worst through an artifice different from delusion. We start with a brief clinical fragment in which the subject, overcome by a psychosis aggravated by the racism he suffered within his own family, reveals the Coloniality of being at play in the relationship with the Other. His journey through analytical experience allows him to open gaps so that his know-how with *lalangue* rescues what was foreclosed from the transmission of his origin, through the place of object of the Other's jouissance, which traps him in a fixed meaning.

Since his childhood, he was oppressed by racism, both within his family, which tried to adapt him to the ideals of a neo-Pentecostal religion, and from his classmates and teachers. This subject, who has a severe speech impediment, finds in the *terreiro* of an African-rooted religion a space for self-care. During an argument, his mother, who persecutes him through

religious racism, destroys the artifacts he uses in his celebrations in the *terreiro*. From then on, the elementary phenomena of psychosis appear distinctly in the persecutory speech about the mother, to whom the patient attributes the moniker of 'sugar mill mistress'. Here, the place of the Other's object of jouissance, typical of psychosis, coincides with the place of racial objectification. The subject then starts to speak through a mix of the prosody of the entities of the African-rooted religion, the signifiers he hears in the *terreiro* and words from Bantu languages. What the analyst hears is what was silenced and could emerge through the deformation of language. His speech is senseless, but serves as a bulwark against the designations, the insults the patient has heard since his childhood. In order not to remain dominated, catechised by the one father god, where he is but the object of a fixed meaning, the subject resorts to the myriad gods of the *terreiro*, with whom one may speak. Thus, juxtaposing the Lacanian concept of *lalangue* with Lélia Gonzalez's Blackguese and the clinical vignette, we can infer that the *parlêtre's* response to racist violence is to resort to the traces of erased languages, the rhythm and sonority that constitute the prosody of the entities present in the *terreiro*, and words of the Bantu language, to which he imparts a very unique and peculiar, almost musical tone in his speech, to authorise himself to speak from the *lalangue*, outside the meaning given and expected by the consistent and oppressing Other. It is uncommon to consider psychotic symptoms as something beyond a defence to the Other's object of jouissance, as something that may carry a political dimension. This fragment clearly highlights this political dimension of resistance to oppression, expressed through the original use of language, or in the usage of fragments of languages plural, present in the *lalangue*. To take aspects of class, race, and gender into consideration is at the core of psychoanalytic work, so the analyst can avoid falling into the same threatening position of those who historically extracted a sadistic jouissance from putting their racist discourse in action.

We also highlight that African-rooted religions in Brazil produce a linguistic know-how as resistance to the erasure of original languages imposed by colonisation:

> Many Afro religious expressions, thanks to this resistance, were incorporated into the popular Brazilian dialect. We understand this possibility of transmission as a know-how in the face of the imminent violence of the situation of slavery, which permitted the survival of a certain symbolic anchoring of the history and ancestry of the colonized. Elements that survive today and which are constituted, as Neusa Santos Souza points out, as one of the possible solutions for black people to deal with the violence of racism and the imperative of whitening. (Cardenas, 2023, p. 216)

In addition to the role of African-rooted religions, with their traditions marked by orality, it is essential to consider that the transmission of these traces of linguistic resistance in culture occurred through the role of black women who cared for their own children as well as the children of their dominators, first as slaves who played the roles of wet nurses and 'black mothers', and later as nannies, as pointed out by Lélia Gonzalez:

> It is interesting to see how, through the figure of the 'black mother', the truth emerges from the equivocation (Lacan, 1979). …who is it that breastfeeds, that bathes, that cleans poop, that puts to sleep, that wakes up in the middle of the night to look after, to teach how to speak, to tell stories, and so on? She's the mother, isn't she? Well then. She is the mother in this crazy mess that is Brazilian culture. As a slave, she is the woman; so, 'ba', she is the mother. The white woman, the so-called legitimate wife, is precisely the other woman who, as impossible as it may seem, is only used to give birth to the master's children. She does not perform any motherly duties. This is done by the black woman. That's why the 'black mother' is the mother. And when we talk about motherly duties, we are saying that the black mother, in so doing, passed on all the values that concerned her to the Brazilian child, as Caio Prado Júnior says. This child, this *infans*, is the so-called Brazilian culture, whose language is Blackguese. The motherly role concerns the internalization of values, teaching the mother tongue and a series of other things. (Gonzales, 1984, p. 235)

In our clinical vignette we observed a specificity in the response of the subject who called for the mobilisation of one of the Lacanian concepts present in the Joyce paradigm, a subject who was able to do without his father, with the condition of using his writing as the articulating factor between the real and the imaginary, as we read in Seminar XXIII: The Sinthome. This subject goes beyond the father and the phallic meaning by his use of *lalangue* in its shape of a trace of black resistance in culture, as Lélia Gonzales (1984) showed us with the concept of *Blackguese*.

As demonstrated throughout this article, the work aims to juxtapose psychoanalysis and decolonial thought so as to extract the psychic impacts of assimilationist colonisation policies that eradicate the languages originally spoken in those dominated lands. We thus propose that the approximation between these two fields of thought takes place through the clinical case, demonstrating in practice the incidence of coloniality upon clinical reality. In the aforementioned vignette, we can see that the place of the object of jouissance of the Other—typical of psychosis—coincides with racial objectification. In psychosis, the articulation between S1 and S2 does not produce a phallic signification, and therefore a meaning grounded in Oedipus. It is within this structure that the subject finds himself drifting in the swarm of master signifiers and must construct an anchor to replace the non-inscription of the name-of-the-father, so he will not be overwhelmed by language. Generally speaking, however, upon studying clinical cases and classical theory on psychosis, one is not usually able to pinpoint how racial suffering returns to what was foreclosed, and how the *parlêtre's* linguistic inventions create a barrier before the Other that takes jouissance in him as an object both in their social and political bonds. The singular solution for this subject, vilified by racism and oppressed by the geopolitical determinants of colonialism, such as he is, is to mobilise the traces of original languages that survived the extinction process. It is worth noting the severe inhibition that impaired the subject's speech. Considering that 'to speak is to exist absolutely for the other' (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 33), the subject in question only allows himself to speak in the *terreiro*, a space that has been resisting for centuries, even in the face of contemporary neocolonial assaults. In accordance with Fanon's guidance, we can infer that

this space permits the subject's existence, for it is there that he allows himself to speak. Thus, as this article's aim is to demonstrate the effects of coloniality on the psychoanalytic clinic, the clinical case supports the argument that if, on the one hand, the subject affected by coloniality is branded by western language with the indicative sign of the worst (Cardenas, 2023), on the other, this subject is also affected by speech articulated by ancestral languages that were not completely erased by colonial undertakings and which remains in the linguistic characteristics of the *lalangue*, provider of jouissance. Given the formal limits of this publication, a deeper case study is not wholly possible. However, the foremost objective of the presentation of this clinical vignette is, as stated, to demonstrate the incidence of coloniality upon clinical reality and the subject's unconscious response in the face of racism.

Colonial barbarity suppresses the diversity of the Amerindian and African worldviews, with their diversity of gods, languages, and meanings, imposing a monolithic universe of a single deity as a male father figure, a single language as a father language, and a single and fixed meaning to which colonised peoples are attached. Faced with a symbolic that deprives them of their own condition as subjects, these peoples find a form of subversion through *lalangue*, a mother tongue that is transmitted through the female figure of the black mother and the plurality of deities in religions of African origin, which goes beyond the fixed meaning of the father language. This subversion of meaning points to something that eludes phallic logic, and veers towards the feminine.

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PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Provocations from Amerindian perspectivism to psychoanalysis: Rethinking nature and culture in the analytical experience

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ABSTRACT

Starting from a dialogue between Amerindian perspectivism and psychoanalysis—more specifically, concerning the conceptual pair nature and culture—the goal of this article is to outline a notion of cultural experience in psychoanalysis and highlight its consequences for the psychoanalytic clinic. In order to do that, we investigate the notions of nature and culture in Freud's work and then present Viveiros de Castro's (1996) considerations on the subject, in the context of Amerindian perspectivism. Based mainly on Winnicott's considerations about potential space, we then elaborate on the concept of cultural experience in psychoanalysis. Our hypothesis is that it has a bearing on the analytical experience, especially with regard to the intentionality of other beings. Two clinical vignettes are presented in order to help define the analytical experience as a state of 'between-ness', a process in which analyst and analysand are engaged in the possibility of becoming more fully themselves.

The sermons and letters of Father Antônio Vieira, written during his stay in Brazil as a missionary, resume the Second Scholasticism first developed in the 16th century. One of the aspects of this doctrine, the ideological basis of the colonial enterprise, consists of the evangelical obligation to preach to every creature—the opposite of some theses that, by attributing little intelligence and spiritual capacity to the indigenous population, left them out of the Christian religious system. The writings concern a supposedly disordered and wild

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territory that needs to be saved from barbarism in order to be constituted as a civilisation. Vieira (1957) writes to the Provincial of Brazil: 'Many are very rude and barbaric, due to a lack of culture rather than to nature' (p. 398). Culture, brought by the Europeans, would then provide the necessary clothing for the population that inhabited the colonised territories to cover their animal nature; of nature, only the traces that could be exploited or enjoyed by civilised humans were praised: beautiful landscapes, gold, and brazilwood. The transformation of nature into natural resources was (and still is) considered synonymous with order, progress, and modernisation, legitimising the uses of 'nature' to generate massive amounts of 'natural resources', the raw material for the Industrial Revolution.

The artificial distinction between human and non-human (and other dichotomies such as nature *versus* culture, civilisation *versus* barbarism, and religion *versus* science) lies at the core of modern thought and supports the ontological division of the world into inseparable, homogeneous categories (Lugones, 2014). Establishing a division between pairs of opposites comes, therefore, in the wake of the construction of a strongly racist hegemonic discourse that enshrined Europe as the epicentre of enunciation from which patterns of civilisation and production of knowledge were outlined; it is a division between modern reason and other reasons, modern man and other existences—existences of bodies and places subordinated by coloniality (Fanon, 1952/2008). The opposition between the pairs of terms that make up the 'nature/culture' dualism constituted, therefore, one of the keystones of modernity/coloniality in its project of ruthless and violent exploitation of bodies and territories.

It is clear that the articulation between psychoanalysis and the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, undertaken mainly by Lacan (1956/1998), brought forth a first displacement from this movement, since it implies the abandonment of a developmentalist perspective that draws a teleological line from the primitive to the civilised, stressing structure as a symbolic dimension that is inseparable from language and that permeates everyone. Culture in psychoanalysis is often considered synonymous with the paternal law, that is, a symbolic order that marks a break from nature and leaves an inescapable remainder. It is, therefore, primarily a force of drive control and a garment that separates the human from animality. Anthropology, since Lévi-Strauss, has continued to debate other ways of conceiving culture and, above all, other approaches to the much-discussed issue of the division between nature and culture.

Our resorting to contemporary anthropology and, more specifically, to Amerindian perspectivism, is thus a fruitful way to better define the concept of cultural experience in contemporary psychoanalysis. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to encourage a dialogue between Amerindian perspectivism and psychoanalysis, more specifically concerning the pair nature and culture. We aim to contribute to the problematisation of the dualism of nature and culture in psychoanalysis by identifying some guidelines for the concept of cultural experience and its connection to the analytical experience. Through two clinical

vignettes, we attempt to present the analytical experience as a process analogous to dreaming, occupying a place of 'between-ness' among different beings, and capable of forging new worlds. To this end, we briefly analyse the notions of nature and culture in Freud's work and then introduce the considerations of Viveiros de Castro (1996), in the context of Amerindian perspectivism.

CULTURE (AND NATURE) IN FREUD'S WORK

Looking for a definition of culture in psychoanalysis is an arduous and controversial task. Costa (1989), for example, maintains that in the most authoritative Freudian texts on culture, civilisation, masses, religion, etc., it is not possible to identify consistent foundations to speak of a psychoanalytic theory of culture. The cultural dimension for Freud is, from this perspective, strongly marked by his metapsychological concern around the psychic constitution—which, in turn, doesn't correspond to a disregard for it. For Costa (1989), Freud manages to make us see, perhaps like no other thinker, what the world of men without institutions or rules would look like: a catastrophic scenario of unbridled impulses. Therefore, even though a theory of culture cannot be precisely outlined based on his work, the cultural dimension is undeniably central.

In general, it can be said that the Freudian hypothesis about culture is mainly supported by the model of the psychic apparatus based on neurosis: culture and the defensive mechanism of repression go hand in hand. The role of culture, mainly throughout the first Freudian topography, concerns the viability of drive renunciation. In his words:

> the human culture—I mean everything in which human life has risen above its animalistic conditions and in which it is distinguished from the life of animals—and I refuse to separate culture [Kultur] from civilisation [Zivilisation]—shows the observer as is known, two sides. In one of them, it encompasses all the knowledge and capacity that human beings would acquire to dominate the forces of nature and extract their goods from it to satisfy human needs; and, on the other, all the devices necessary to regulate the relations of human beings with one another, and especially the distribution of accessible goods... Culture needs, therefore, to be defended against the individual, and its devices, institutions and commandments are placed at the service of this task: these aim not only to establish a certain distribution of goods, but also to maintain it; in fact, they need to protect from the hostile motions of human beings everything that serves to conquer nature and produce goods. (Freud, 1930/2020, pp. 234–235)

It is important to stress that the use of the terms '*Kultur*' and '*Zivilisation*' interchangeably is not the product of mere chance: Freud refuses to adopt the difference between the two as a support of his definition, making it clear to the reader, on the other hand, that he was aware of the different ideas they expressed (Ianini & Santiago, 2020). This is a political position, since, at the time, '*Zivilisation*' consisted of an expression used to designate the utilitarian English world, associated with the domain of technology, economics, and politics. The term

'*Kultur*', in turn, was used to define the Germanic values underpinning the 1914 conflict and the growing violence that led to the Third Reich. Ianini and Santiago (2020) claim that Freud does not endorse, by refusing the opposition between these terms, the nationalist illusion, especially the German one, according to which the Indo-Germanic peoples were the only ones capable of culture. Freud, by not distinguishing the two terms, extends culture (or civilisation) to everyone, and thus identifies as it one of the sources of human suffering. This point of view is quite explicit in his letter to Einstein:

> What I think is the following: since time immemorial, the process of cultural development has occurred in humanity. (I know others prefer to call it civilisation). It is to this process that we owe the best of what we have become and a good part of what we suffer. (Freud, 1930/2020, p. 440)

In view of this preamble, it is important to point out some guidelines for the Freudian discussion on culture, mainly within the scope of the first topography. It is, therefore, a process which permeates everyone and has a double aim: regulation and restriction of instinctual motions. Culture is considered, therefore, as an ally of the suffering arising from the conflict between impulses and the restrictions imposed on them. Now, if we consider Costa's (1989) statement that the Freudian discussion about culture is mainly anchored in his interest in the genesis of the psyche and, more specifically, is located primarily in the neurotic paradigm, the articulation of the cultural dimension with the constitution of the neurotic subject becomes inevitable. This correlation can be explicitly found in Freud's work—for example, in one of the first texts deemed 'cultural' by Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 1913/2012). Freud's most anthropological text also contains a paradigmatic example of how culture is conceived in tandem with the conflict between the demands of impulses and repression. It draws a parallel between the establishment of the cultural dimension and neurosis: as is known, from this perspective, ontogenesis repeats phylogenesis.

The totem, more specifically, the totemic animal, is defined as a substitute for the tyrannical father murdered by the brothers in the primal horde. This founding murder is celebrated with a feast in which the totem is devoured—the homicidal impulse is thus buried under guilt, which is in turn reinforced by acts, beliefs, and reparatory rituals (religious ones, analogous to obsessive thinking). After the murder and the totemic ritual, a kind of fraternity is established around the feeling of guilt linked to the murder, which prevents the repetition of tyranny by one of the individuals. The totemic organisation replaces the primal horde and gives rise to a new way of life, as the brothers begin to restrain their impulses through identification with the totemic animal, a representative of the murdered father.

This plot is often evoked as a founding myth of culture as separated from nature. The latter, related to the free impulses of the primal horde, is partially dominated with the fraternity established by the death of the primal father and the identification with the totem. The decision by the brothers to renounce the father's place turns his death into parricide and the survivors into accomplices to the primordial crime, subjects divided, barred, subjected to

castration, and symbolically owning it. Defeated, dead, and mourned, the leader of the horde becomes a symbolic Father, Name-of-the-Father. Alterity is hereby signalled by the symbolic dimension of the totem and the mechanism of identification to it. From this perspective, the primordial crime is the symbol of the origin of culture (or civilisation): all those who are traversed by language are complicit in this crime. Drive renunciation is considered, therefore, a condition of the social bond. Culture is thus connected to the constitution of the social bond and to the renunciation of impulses, restriction, and viability (of the social order). Inspired mainly by evolutionary anthropologists, Freud takes animism as a form of primitive thought analogous to omnipotent thought, that is, a projection of one's own desires into the world, relegating alterity to the articulated symbolic dimension—to totemism or the paternal law.

Freudian considerations about animism and totemism paradoxically reveal lines of continuity and rupture with modern tradition. By indicating that the 'comparison between the psychology of primitive peoples and the psychology of neurotics is destined to find numerous points of agreement' (Freud, 1913/2012, p. 20), Freud maintains that the animism present in 'primitive peoples'—this Other, foreign to the modern European subject—is not overcome, but continues alive and well, as observed in neurotic symptoms. Endowing things with a soul would not just be for 'primitives', but for all of us.

Freud hesitated throughout his journey between a rationalist and intellectualist conception of culture and a conception that sees the social as produced by lacerating and irreconcilable conflicts (Costa, 1989). Even when he affirms the existence, within the scope of the second topography and the second drive theory, of the inescapable remainder, the malaise inherent to culture, one of its main limitations will be the 'superior power of nature' (Freud, 1930/2020, p. 332). The considerations brought by the new instinctual dualism do not refashion his conception of culture, but point out its restrictions. In his words: 'We will never completely dominate nature; our organism, itself a part of that nature, will always be a passing formation, limited in terms of adaptation and realization.' (Freud, 1930/2020, p. 333).

Although throughout his work Freud avoids providing a precise definition of what he conceives as culture (and as nature), it is nevertheless possible to delineate some aspects of this conceptual pair, above all regarding the role of culture that runs through his entire work. Let's follow an excerpt from *Civilization and Its Discontents*:

> It suffices for us, therefore, to repeat that the word 'culture' [Kultur] characterizes the sum of the achievements and devices through which our life distances itself from that of our animal ancestors and which serve two purposes: the protection of the human being against nature and the regulation of the relationships between human beings. (Freud, 1930/2020, p. 337)

Therefore, the notion of culture outlined in the main Freudian discussions on the subject is based on the repetition of the ontogenesis of the neurotic subject and, even though its limitations are precisely laid out, it has drive restriction as its cornerstone. On the other hand, the persistence of nature and even primitive impulses allows us to glimpse Freud's break from

teleology and points to the permanence of nature within culture itself. Therefore, even though the Freudian conception of culture is mainly grounded in contributions from evolutionary anthropologists and marked by the separation between primitive and civilised, the path opened by psychoanalysis allows us continue to build bridges with anthropology in order to rethink our ideas about culture (and nature).

FROM MULTICULTURALISM TO MULTINATURALISM: NATURE AND CULTURE IN AMERINDIAN PERSPECTIVISM

Anthropology since Freud has provided, as we have shown here, not only an important field of dialogue for psychoanalysis, but its contributions have worked as a kind of foundation that helps sustain metapsychological elaborations. The paths followed by *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 1913/2012) are grounded in the anthropology of the time, mostly in the so-called evolutionist anthropology, although they were criticised by some of Freud's contemporary anthropologists, such as Malinowksi. Lacan, in turn, used Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology as one of his main allies—it was by transforming it into one of the foundations of his notion of the unconscious, along with Saussure's linguistics, that the return to Freud as a critique of the psychoanalytical movement of the 1950s was made possible. Therefore, exploring the contributions of contemporary anthropology is not a mere intellectual whim for the psychoanalyst.

Starting from ethnographies of the Amazonian peoples, Viveiros de Castro (2018) claims that perspectivist theories bring about a kind of inversion of modern anthropology, an anthropology in reverse, which refuses to be yet another case of artificial systematisation by an anthropologist or a caricatured portrait of one of multiple possible cultures. It does not represent, however, an absolute break with the anthropology that precedes it; the considerations brought by Amerindian perspectivism, despite asserting a form of difference, follow in the footsteps of the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss. For Viveiros de Castro (2018), it is possible to find alternatives to structuralism in Strauss's own work, precisely in the discussion around totemism. The paradigmatic contrast between 'totemism' and 'sacrifice', appearing both in 'Totemism today' (Lévi-Strauss, 2018) and in 'Savage thought' (Lévi-Strauss, 1990), refers to a generalised opposition between myth and ritual. While totemism postulates a homology between two parallel series (nature and social groups)— that is, a metaphorical division—sacrifice refers to metonymy (one can easily envisage here the discussion later carried out by Lacan). The real and non-reversible mediation between two terms, humans and divinities, carried out through sacrifice, makes up a kind of system of operations. The line chosen by Viveiros de Castro, supported by the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2010), seeks to rethink anthropology along similar lines, based on the concept of sacrifice. In other words, just as the abovementioned philosophers developed a critique of the neurotic and Oedipal paradigm, Viveiros de Castro's aim is to shift the

perspective from myth to sacrifice in anthropology, emphasising the field of dynamic virtualities that sacrifice mobilises as a process.

This path, called by Viveiros de Castro (2015) 'anti-narcissistic', derives from a reassessment of animism as perspectivism, as a 'true anti-totemic operator' (p. 101). Perspectivism, as an ethno-epistemological corollary of animism, ends up producing an 'asymmetric twist' (p. 15): while animism presupposes an attribution of supposedly exclusive human characteristics to things, perspectivism starts from the assumption that intentionality is the one thing all beings have in common. When we investigate Amerindian mythology, a completely different conception of relationship comes out. In this worldview, all animals were once human—all things were human. What the myths narrate is the process by which beings who were human ceased to be so, lost their original condition—the antithesis of our modern mythology. For us, the common ground between humans and other animals is animality or nature, but not humanity. From the point of view espoused mainly by modern European thought, humans are an animal species, but not exactly 'one among others', because we are endowed with something else: culture or language. The instincts, behind the layers of varnish that is culture, constitute our animal background and culture would then give an Apollonian contour to animality.

Contrary to the naturalistic ontology of Westerners, the basic idea contained in perspectivism is considering culture as something universal—humans and non-humans are endowed with social relations—and nature as multiple. Intentionality, defined by the idea of spirit, would be the common link between human and non-human beings, who resemble each other not because of the radical division or the homogeneity of what they express or perceive. All beings, endowed with intentionality, are not equal and are differentiated by the body: the perceptions of a being about another one are directly connected to their clothing, that is, to their body. Intentionality, from this perspective, is not exclusive to humans: all beings are endowed with intentionality. Culture is the common ground; nature is multiple.

Therefore, the shifts brought about by Amerindian perspectivism in the concept of animism are based above all on the fundamental question of the difference between what is 'proper to man' and what is, on the contrary, an existing property in general—a problem concerning the modern division between nature and culture. The discourses of the so-called natives are not just about their needs or their minds, they do not reflect a specific way of conceiving an idea of nature or concepts represented by a certain cultural panorama but are ways of creating a world that must be considered as essentially different from ours.

This diversity of perspectives results in a so-called multinaturalism—that is, not the affirmation of the variety of natures, but the 'naturality' of variation. If in the mononaturalism that characterises modernity, subject and object are distinct poles with regard to intentionality, multinaturalism conceives the object as 'an incompletely interpreted subject' (Viveiros de Castro, 2018, p. 360). The point of view does not create the object but forges the

very subject instead. In other words, it is not the subject that creates the perspective, but the perspective that creates the subject. Hereby, everyone knows the world, but the world they know is not the same—epistemology is constant, ontology is variable. The concept of animism is therefore put into perspective: it is not a matter of attributing a soul to things, but of calling into question how things themselves exist. In other words, what is at stake here is not a subject who, separated from the object, can know the world through thought, but perspectives that displace subject and object—everything that exists in the cosmos can be a subject, just not simultaneously.

In seeking to overcome relativism and universalism, the conception of metaphysical continuity and physical discontinuity, that is, a common spirit and specification through the body, Amerindian perspectivism makes a case for multinaturalism and ontological plurality. In a symmetrically inverse logic to that which conceives culture through its universal aspect, culture is here the varying aspect and nature, in turn, is taken as homogeneously universal—not as transcendental, but associated with different ontologies. The ontological turn allows us, therefore, to highlight the potential of different ways of being and possible worlds—it moves from the conceptualisation or description of culture to the possibility of experiencing other worlds.

Neither Freud nor Lacan had access to the most recent discussions in the field of anthropology, especially those that throw light on the consequences and limits of a certain way of conceiving nature and culture, taking the path opened by structural anthropology further. If anthropology was in the past an important ally for the great thinkers of psychoanalysis, it could not be different today. With this in mind, how do the considerations brought by Amerindian perspectivism, especially about nature and culture, provoke psychoanalysis? If it is possible to question the idea of culture as a symbolic dimension divorced from nature, how can we grasp the issue of culture in contemporary psychoanalysis? What would be the contribution of psychoanalysis itself to the scope of cultural experience? Although it is not possible to exhaust the further developments that these questions might foster, from the path taken so far we are going to outline some aspects of a definition of cultural experience in psychoanalysis which can be on a par with the displacements caused by Amerindian perspectivism.

CHARTING A COURSE TO DEFINE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

As we have seen, when we talk about culture in psychoanalysis, often the first idea that comes to mind is the imposition of cultural predicates that include or exclude certain forms of satisfaction—a perspective grounded above all in the neurotic paradigm. The way in which they shape drive restriction is certainly an important aspect of what Freudian psychoanalysis termed civilised sexual morality. The displacements brought forth by contemporary

anthropology, in turn, start from the perspective of the Amerindian peoples, in which multinaturalism and ontological plurality allow the creation of different worlds. Culture, in this context, cannot be thought of as a product or externally imposed on man, but is located between the self and the world: it is less important to conceptualise culture or delimit its function than to understand it as a process not to be found in man—or built from a single, external, and static nature—but in a dimension between intentionality, an attribute that humans share with other beings, and multiple natures. The word 'located' here is not arbitrary and it is precisely at this point that we can appreciate the contribution of psychoanalysis to a certain conception of cultural experience that seeks to further the criticism posed by contemporary anthropology to modern European thought. From an epistemological perspective, it is not so much about resorting to anthropology to elucidate psychoanalysis, as it is about outlining some contributions of psychoanalysis to the conception of cultural experience. It is not a matter of transposing Amerindian thought to the analytical past, but of envisioning paths in psychoanalysis that admit of a displacement of the modern division between nature and culture and its reverberations in the analytical experience.

One of the authors who seems to displace the conception of culture as a regulator of the drive is precisely Donald Winnicott. Winnicott (1967/1975), in his text 'The Location of Cultural Experience', hints at an interesting criticism of a certain understanding of culture in psychoanalysis which, along with the discussion of Amerindian perspectivism, shows a fruitful path towards a notion of cultural experience in contemporary psychoanalysis:

> Freud, in his topography of the mind, found no place for the experience of cultural things. He gave a new value to inner psychic reality and from that came a new value to things that are real and truly external… but perhaps it has not reached the point of telling us where, in the mind, cultural experience is found. (Winnicott, 1967/1975, p. 133)

Based on this observation, Winnicott makes use of the idea of location to discuss the cultural experience. It is interesting to note that the English psychoanalyst dedicates a large part of the article's introduction to the chosen epigraph: 'On the seashore of endless worlds children meet' by Tagore. What Winnicott hints at is that Tagore's poem contributed to his discussion on the location of cultural experience. In his words: 'I understood, however, that *the game, in fact, is not a matter of internal psychic reality, nor of external reality either*.' (Winnicott, 1975/2019, p. 134, emphasis in the original). The word 'shore' is used to designate the coast, the seaside, that is, a space of mobile and fluctuating borders that constantly oscillates on the threshold between sea and land. No wonder one of the synonyms for 'shore' is 'border': it suffices to walk along the beach for one to realise that the edges of the sea oscillate infinitely, leaving an impression of numerous lines that intertwine like mountain ranges in an impressionist painting. In Tagore's poem, a few stanzas ahead of the one chosen by Winnicott, we read 'Children have their play on the seashore of worlds' (p. 134). The expression 'seashore of worlds', in our view, highlights the central point of the Winnicottian

argument about the location of cultural experience: neither internal nor external, it is a transitive force, an indeterminate crossing between the internal and the external.

It is precisely from a paradoxical dimension, from the 'realm of the between two', to use an expression by Pontalis (2005), that Winnicott (1975/2019) establishes an essential relationship between illusion, transitional objects, playing, and cultural experience. The field of potential phenomena is related not only to playing, but to the entire cultural experience. We are in the dimension of the illusion that allows the baby to create the world and emerge from a certain non-differentiation with its environment, an ontological source of creativity, of access to reality and the possibility of experiencing culture. This is so because it is a place forged by the symbol of union or, in his words: '*this is the place that I set out to examine*, the separation that is not a separation, but a form of union' (Winnicott, 1967/1975, p. 136, emphasis in the original). The location of the cultural experience is heir to the illusion and creation of this space-time:

> I used the term 'cultural experience' as an extension of the idea of transitional phenomena and play, without being sure I could define the word 'culture'. The emphasis is actually on experience. Using the word 'culture', I am thinking of inherited tradition. I am thinking of something that belongs to the common fund of humanity, to which individuals and groups can contribute, and which we can all benefit from, *if we have a place to store what we find*. (Winnicott, 1967/1975, pp. 137–138, emphasis in the original)

Now, in this passage a paradox is evident: culture presupposes a tradition and, on the other hand, 'those who offer us a cultural contribution are never repeated, except as deliberate citation, plagiarism being the unforgivable sin of the cultural field' (Winnicott, 1975/2019, p. 138). However, the simultaneity between originality and acceptance of tradition as the basis of innovation cannot happen if there is not 'a place to store what we find'. Hence, more than defining what culture is, Winnicott hints at the contribution of psychoanalysis to this subject, by showing that it is necessary to create a space-time so that culture can be experienced. The potential space, since it forms a continuum with the experience of illusion, stresses the potentiality (not for nothing does the expression 'potential' characterise this concept) of updating creativity in a dimension that is not associated either with material reality or with the plane of psychic reality—'children play on the seashore of worlds'.

In order to discuss the cultural experience in psychoanalysis, therefore, it is necessary to go beyond a dimension of regulation of the cultural heritage: as indicated by Winnicott, the cultural experience is articulated with the permanent tension of the task of relating internal and external reality—culture is experienced in a space-time of indeterminacy. As an experience that preserves 'formlessness', the cultural experience cannot just be an imposition, because it actualises the potential of creating worlds—culture and creativity go hand in hand. The cultural experience, therefore, is about relaxation, as opposed to the need to remain integrated: it is the experimentation of non-integration, that is, of lines not completely drawn between me and the world.

In this context, the cultural experience encourages the necessary bridge-building between the objective and the subjective, a task that is never completely finished. It is a 'war that, in fact, has no end'—assuming an end 'would consist in discovering something that is not true, that is, that what the world offers is equal to what the individual creates' (Winnicott, 1945/1978, p. 251). Cultural experience creates worlds, but not in a solipsistic way—it's a matter of separation and union.

It is interesting to note that, from Latin, the word *culturae* refers to the 'action of treating', 'cultivating', 'caring'. The cultural experience, as a process of differentiation and indifferentiation, updates the possibility of feeling alive and continuing to exist in time. Ogden (1994/1996), inspired by Winnicott's considerations, states that when we're reading a book, watching a film, or truly coming into contact with a cultural experience, something human is updated. It is neither possible nor necessary, in this experience, to distinguish what is part of oneself or what is part of the other; for Ogden, a posteriori, what we find are transformations of myself that I did not know before—the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate but interrelated. Culture as an experience, therefore, entails the possibility of updating the continuity of being, of creating a kind of reservoir of updates with which we contribute and by which we are permeated as long as there is a space for this—it is precisely this space that allows us to experience the sensation of being alive and creating the world. The cultural experience, considered as an experience of the multiple and of non-integration, is one of the ways in which the subject is faced with his own opacity and, as such, can recreate and be recreated by collective agencies. It is a kind of practice of recognition in which the act of returning to oneself becomes impossible, since the self is a type of being for which permanence within oneself proves impossible.

Considering the provocations outlined by Amerindian perspectivism, we must stress that the analytical experience must be open to questioning the asymmetry of points of view of different beings—as well as the alternation between the roles of subject and object. This is due to the fact that, as we have seen, if in the naturalistic world of modernity nature is an external object to be known by the subject, the Amerindian interpretative convention follows the opposite principle: culture is the way in which every agent, human or non-human, experiences their own nature which, in turn, is multiple. In this context, the possibility of occupying a point of view is a matter of degree and situation, an interchangeable problematic and not a diacritical property of a certain kind. This exchange, in turn, only occurs in relationships between different beings, human and non-human. There is, thus, a shift from the epistemological problem of how we know the world to an ontological question about which beings participate in this world-building equation.

From the shifts brought forth by Amerindian perspectivism in the pairs of modern opposites, we find in Winnicott's considerations about the location of cultural experience some subsidies for a transformation in the conception of culture in psychoanalysis. When the potential for experiencing an indeterminate space, as theorised by Winnicott, meets

perspectivism, we get a glimpse of an alternative to modern epistemology and its separation between opposites such as subject and object and nature and culture. Cultural experience, thus, encourages us to rethink the analytical experience towards a process in which analyst and analysand—and why not other beings, too?—are engaged in the possibility of becoming more fully themselves through a zone of indeterminacy.

CULTURAL EXPERIENCE AND ANALYTICAL EXPERIENCE

If culture is not considered an exclusive attribute of the human in opposition to nature, but a potentiality of all beings and their points of view that comes to fruition in relations, what are the possible implications for the analytical experience? How can we conceive of the reverberations of the non-human environment, to use an expression by Searls (1960), as part of the potential experience of the indetermination of cultural and analytical experience? Two clinical vignettes are here mobilised, but multiple actors are present in them:

Suits walk hurriedly between cars, badges cluster on the sidewalks, blocking circulation. Buses, motorbikes, and ambulances seem to make constant noises—in the concrete jungle of the centre of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), the background noise is the result of the burning of fossil fuels. The office was strategically set up in that location a few years earlier: between the poorest and the wealthiest areas of the city—as a young psychoanalyst, I was eager to hear from people from all walks of life. Iris had recently been referred by a dear psychiatrist friend: borderline personality disorder—the authoritativeness of the medical discourse did leave room for doubt. Suicide attempts, passages à l'act: at the age of 20, the young woman had a long psychiatric record. For a few months, I saw her twice a week. Even the background buzz of the centre of Rio disappeared, everything was empty. Completely lost in that immensity, in an ice desert, I saw a mirage: when Iris spoke about Skadi, a recently rescued mutt, other affective tones coloured space-time. In the next session, I opened the door and there they were, among cars, suits, and ambulances: Iris and Skadi sitting on the sofa in the office's waiting room. Between Iris, Skadi, and I, there was more vitality. Each of us was more than one, but less than three. Today, I still see Iris once a week, and Skadi comes sometimes—all three of us talk.

Another situation took place back in 2020 when, like true cyborgs, we were machine-analysts, traversed by networks of suffering that materialised in space-time on our screens. We almost couldn't talk: part of my symptoms overlapped with those of Fernanda, a renowned professional and mother of an 11-year-old boy locked in his room, wandering around the digital space and practically apathetic to any human stimulus. The conversation between us, Fernanda and I, in the short breaks of our busy schedules, only took place after my supervisor pointed out our inability to talk about João.

My first conversation with João was through the screen. Despite being separated by just a few kilometres, receiving him in person was still not possible (not just because of the pandemic, as we'll see shortly). (Translator's note: The expression for 'in person' used in the original text is the somewhat poetic 'em corpo vivo', which gains a special meaning when paired with the analysand's reply to the question about how he's doing: 'alive' ['vivo', in Portuguese].) The call is made, the screen lights up, and I see an unexpected figure: a French bulldog with a flat snout and pointy ears. Taken by surprise, I greeted the dog and started looking for João... in vain. Until I decided to ask the dog's name: Tobias. Tobias and I spoke for around three months—the sessions were very important and little by little we built a space for genuine exchanges, despite, until then, not having actually seen João: his voice came from Tobias' mouth. It was difficult to explain to Fernanda what was happening. It was a long way before João could appear in his human form—I still see him today, in the office. At 13 years old, he intrigues me every time I ask, intentionally or not, how he is: 'alive', he replies. Tobias never came to the office.

At different times, both clinical stories reveal the permeability between humans and non-humans and the importance of borders, initially not so well-defined, so that a process could be established. Being able to experience non-integration and becoming another with others is the inescapable condition both for the possibility of experiencing culture and for the analytical traverse—whether for the analyst or for the analysand. The analytical experience, therefore, goes hand in hand with the cultural experience: to paraphrase Tagore, analyst and patient playing on the seashore of worlds. Here, the Freudian maxim '*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*', at the suggestion of Ogden (2020), can be translated as: 'what had been experienced as other for itself ("it") is incorporated into the being itself (who I am, who "I should be", who I am becoming)' (p. 38).

The indissociation between the cultural experience and the analytical experience is related, therefore, not to what can be represented from an external nature, but to an open field of actualisation of possible virtualities between us and the world. What is at stake is, therefore, as Winnicott points out when commenting on Searls' propositions (Winnicott, 1984/1994), the possibility of creating a shared environment that does not coincide with the environment permeated by projections. In his words:

> the environment in which I what I refer to in the concept of double dependence is an environment that, essentially, is not made up of projections. Later, the individual may come to a recognition of this in a sophisticated acceptance of 'shared' reality. (Winnicott, 1984/1994, p. 128)

The analytical experience, in its articulation with the cultural experience, cannot therefore be conceived as a process of adaptation to a supposedly shared external reality, but consists of an experience of 'between-ness'. Following Viveiros de Castro's considerations in the field of ethnography, one must take seriously the different possible worlds—between analyst and analysand, between different beings. It is interesting to note that, according to Ogden (2020)

who again borrows from Winnicott, one can make a distinction between two ways of conceiving psychoanalysis, even if there's some overlap between them: epistemological psychoanalysis and ontological psychoanalysis. The epistemological dimension can be thought of as a way of knowing the other whose goal is, through interpretation, to point to anxiety, stressing it as a counterpart to desire. In ontological psychoanalysis, in turn, the issue of knowledge of the other is placed in the background: it is a process in which analyst and analysand are engaged in the possibility of becoming more fully themselves.

However, the possibility of becoming fully oneself is not restricted to the development of an innate human capacity: creativity, in Winnicott's perspective, although it has a phylogenetic origin, must have its ontogenetic origin updated in the relationship with the other, such as the ones taking place between Iris and Skadi, Tobias and João. It is a matter of the actualisation of primary creativity and the feeling of being alive and creative in the world. In this process, 'we become more than we were before having this experience, before having introduced the experience into our personal pattern.' (Ogden, 2020, p. 32).

Perhaps it will thus be possible to think of both the cultural experience and the analytical experience from the point of view of the significant alterities that permeate us, keeping in mind that becoming oneself is also simultaneously seeing oneself inhabited by and as co-creator of different ways of being, a process which may be considered analogous to dreaming. For Ogden (2020), following Winnicott, the analytical experience concerns the possibility of dreaming and thus actualising other potentials of a space that is neither subjective nor objective.

To return to anthropology, the Yanomami, Krenak, and other indigenous peoples inscribe humanity in a web of relations that includes humans and non-humans, all endowed with intentionality. Dreaming, therefore, would be a way of updating this web, a possibility of connection between people and the broader cosmos. Limulja (2022) focuses on the collective dream of the Yanomami, which implies, above all, escaping the familiar. The word mari (dream) is not reduced to the nocturnal dream, but also encompasses other experiences connected to the concept of nomai, that is, 'leaving oneself', 'little death'. 'For the Yanomami, knowing how to dream is knowing how to see, seeing the invisible. The Yanomami theory of knowledge would necessarily go through marimu, that act of coming out of oneself, of fragmentation or partibility of the person' (Limulja, 2022, p. 12). The dream is conceived as an event, as creation, and not as symbolism or representation—it is not a plot restricted to the inner world. Yanomami dreaming, thus, not only articulates the social and the mental, but does so in a way that encompasses different beings.

If we heed the provocations of contemporary anthropology, the analytical experience, when articulated to the cultural experience, points to the possibility of dreaming beyond navel-gazing and thus becomes an instrument to 'postpone the end of the world' (Krenak, 2019). We must get out of the abyss where the indistinct reigns and build a new conception

that seriously admits the creation of other worlds, other natures, and other cultures. To achieve this, we must stop considering the other's perspective as a primitive, abnormal, pathological, immoral, or perverse form of thought, and take it in its full alterity, as something capable of transforming our own image, our own concepts—in short, our own world. Back to dogs (Skadi, Tobias, and Cayenne—Haraway's dog), it's interesting to point out that the species' scientific name is '*canis lupus familiaris*'. The familiar is always the place where the unsettling lurks. Haraway (2021), in her manifesto on companion species, states that one of the good things about the deep difference that might be found in dogs (but not only in them) is the widening of our scope of the mysterious: 'he enriches my ignorance' (p. 299), she says. Therefore, anthropology and, mostly, other possible worlds are indispensable allies to postponing the end of the world.

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PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Decolonisation of psychoanalysis and Mesoamerican conceptions of subjectivity

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ABSTRACT

In this article, situating myself in the context of Mexico and Central America, I critically reflect on psychoanalysis in relation to coloniality, cultural intercourse, native peoples, their ancestral knowledge, and their conceptions of subjectivity. I highlight the cohabitation of psychoanalysts and traditional healers in the Mesoamerican context. I interpret this cohabitation as an expression of the coexistence of European and Mesoamerican cultures. The coexistence of cultures leads me to the question of *mestizaje*, which, conceived as a cultural-symbolic and divisive-conflictive process, can be reconsidered in the light of a psychoanalytical specialisation in the division of the subject with its edge structure. I acknowledge the problematic aspect of the Freudian legacy as part of the colonial inheritance, but I also highlight some of Freud's theoretical and methodological contributions that may be useful for exploring and countering coloniality, including the eternal present of the past, unconscious knowing, the difference between knowledge and truth, and the principles of abstinence and listening. Claiming an essentialism that is *not only* strategic, I detect resonances between psychoanalysis and Mesoamerican ancestral knowledge in the consideration of desire, the singular, the corporeal, the affective, the symbolic, and the external psyche, but also dissonances associated with Freudian drifts such as verticalism, individualism, and speciesism-anthropocentrism. I conclude by cautioning against a colonial use of psychoanalysis and proposing its horizontal dialogue with Mesoamerican ancestral knowledge.

KEYWORDS: psychoanalysis; psychology; indigenous people; decolonisation; coloniality

COEXISTENCE AND MESTIZAJE

Mesoamerica is a cultural region that encompasses central and southern Mexico, as well as Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and part of Costa Rica. In all these

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countries, there are those who teach, study, and practice psychoanalysis. The European Freudian heritage thus manages to stay alive in the region where the descendants of the great Olmec, Toltec, Nahua, Mixtec, Zapotec, Mayan, and other cultures still live.

Indigenous healers, sages, and shamans live in the same countries where psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic scholars also reside. This cohabitation is one of the innumerable manifestations of the coexistence of European and Mesoamerican cultures with their respective configurations and conceptions of subjectivity. It is not just that there are, on the one hand, indigenous rural communities with their shamans, and, on the other hand, cosmopolitan cities with their psychoanalysts. This may be true to some extent in the United States of America with its Amerindian reservations, but not in Mesoamerica and Latin America in general, where the current inhabitants of the region, both rural and urban, indigenous and non-indigenous, have been engendered by a complex historical process of cultural-symbolic mestizaje in which the European and the Mesoamerican are knotted and intertwined.

Needless to say, the cultural-symbolic mestizaje to which I refer, precisely because it is cultural-symbolic, has absolutely nothing to do with racial-biological miscegenation. Nor is it something like that embodied by the *cosmic race* dreamt of by José Vasconcelos (1925/2001), which would be the synthesis and final resolution of our contradictions. Mestizaje is rather what Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1987/2005) teaches us: the experience of the contradictions that tear us apart, as well as the tearing itself, the colonial wound that hurts, that festers, that does not close, that cannot be sutured.

The colonial wound is precisely what we are as mestizos. Mestizaje makes us become what colonialism has inflicted on us, what it has made us suffer, what it has made us be by dividing us from ourselves. Considering how divided we are, it is understandable that the Freudian heritage, specialising in the division of the subject, is so popular in Latin America, the mestizo continent par excellence.

THE WOUNDED AND THE BAROQUE

Mestizaje has the structure of division, of the cut or the edge, in which the Freudian method specialises. This is why psychoanalysis might be more apt than psychology to think about and treat subjects, such as mestizos, who are not only wounded, but who are themselves the wound, the tearing as cut, as edge. No doubt this structure—as psychoanalysis teaches us—is that of any subject, but perhaps the experience of mestizaje is an exemplary case of what is at stake here.

Being mestizo is a paradigmatic and historically revealing form of the impossible human existence on the edge. By situating ourselves on the edge, mestizaje is—as Homi Bhabha

(2013) would say—being 'in between'. We can also say—with the Chicana thinker Gloria Anzaldúa (1987/2016, 1993)—that to be mestizo is 'to live in the Borderlands' (1987/2016, pp. 261–262), or, even better, 'to be Nepantla', taking up the Nahua concept that means 'to be between', to be between two places, that is, for the case at hand, to live between Mesoamerica and Europe, between shamanic chanting and free association (Anzaldúa, 1993).

To live in mestizaje is to live on the border and in the contradiction between cultures. Then our border and contradictory situation is elaborated, unfolded, entangled, and disguised in the baroque not only as an artistic style, but also as that mestizo and colonial existential form on which Bolívar Echeverría (2000) reflected. We can finally unravel something there thanks to the psychoanalytic method, a method deeply akin to the baroque, which Jacques Lacan (1970/1991) already noticed when he was dazzled by Baltasar Gracián (1657/2011).

THE PROBLEM OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

It would seem that the psychoanalytic method is the right one to treat the colonial wound of mestizaje with its baroque symptomatic manifestations, optical illusions, labyrinthine volutes, and rhetorical mystifications in the profuse and garrulous Latin American subjectivity. Apparently, what we are, as colonially wounded beings, could be cured by psychoanalysis. The problem is that psychoanalysis is inseparable from the very coloniality that wounds us. How then could it heal the wound? How could there be a coincidence between the two horizons that Walter Mignolo (2017) has described respectively as 'psychoanalytic healing and decolonial healing' (p. 36)? How to heal from coloniality through something as colonial as the Freudian inheritance?

As Mrinalini Greedharry (2008) warns us, 'the main problem with using pure psychoanalytic structures' in dealing with coloniality 'is simply that it gets us no closer to understanding psychoanalysis as a colonial and colonizing discourse itself' (p. 149). Psychoanalysis cannot cease to be part of what wounds us, as evidenced in a previous article (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2021a). This article, in fact, has shown us that psychoanalysis does not cease to be colonial, however decolonising it may be. Even if it can be useful in an anticolonial project, psychoanalysis is part of the problem and therefore cannot be the solution, of course, assuming that a solution is to be found here.

Psychoanalysis is part of the problem because it is not something culturally neutral, but something as European as the bibles of the evangelisers and the arquebuses of the conquerors. If something like this has been so successful among us, it is not only because it is akin to our baroque style, nor because it specialises in the cut and the edge that constitute us so flagrantly. The Latin American success of something as European as

psychoanalysis has also been, quite simply, due to the previous Europeanisation of Latin America, because Europeans migrated en masse to the continent, because they colonised it, because they mixed with its inhabitants, because they Christianised and Europeanised them, because they managed to impose their model of subjectivity, which is the same model that Freud and his followers have dealt with.

Colonisation prepared the ground for the implantation of psychoanalysis in Latin America. If this continent can be so receptive to psychoanalysis today, it is because it already contains the modern European model of subjectivity that was introduced and entrenched over centuries through the processes of conquest, colonisation and evangelisation, imperialist expansion and capitalist globalisation, neocolonial modernisation and dependent re-education, subsumption of other cultures into capital, and the resulting imposition of capitalisable forms of life and consumption. All these processes constituted the inhabitants of Latin America as subjects of the unconscious for whom the Freudian legacy makes sense.

Let us say that the Freudian legacy is conditioned by the colonial heritage, by conquest, colonisation, colonialism, and its consequences or prolongations. At the same time, the Freudian legacy is part of the colonial heritage, being inseparable from three of its manifestations: the evolutionary economic-political continuation of colonialism in capitalist neocolonialism (Fanon, 1957/2015, 1961/2002; Guevara, 1965/2007; Nkrumah, 1965), the economic-social-cultural internalisation of the colonial system in the internal colonialism of the former colonies (González Casanova, 1969, 1978) and the ideological-psychological and symbolic-imaginary persistence of the colonised condition in coloniality (Quijano, 1992, 2011/2017). It is because of our coloniality that we are both analysable and only analysable in a certain way, but it is because of an inextricable structural knotting of coloniality itself with neocolonial capitalism and internal colonialism that our analysis goes in a certain direction and that some—only some—of us have the restlessness, uncertainty, emptiness, desire, interest, time, money, and other resources necessary to analyse ourselves or to train in psychoanalysis. Our analytic training, the transmission of psychoanalytic theory and the institutional functioning of psychoanalysis also involve neocolonialism, internal colonialism, and coloniality, as well as presupposing colonisation and external colonialism. In all cases, the colonial past is a premise of the no less colonial present in which our psychoanalytic legacy is embedded.

PRESENT OF THE PAST AND KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT KNOWING

We are the subjects of psychoanalysis today because between yesterday and today, right here, we have been first Europeanised and Christianised by colonialism, and then, on the one hand, alienated, commodified, and culturally proletarianised by neocolonial and

internal colonialist capitalism, and, on the other hand, seduced, captured, and constituted or reconstituted by coloniality. Nevertheless, however deeply the European colonial heritage has permeated, it has not been able to encompass all that we are in Latin America, all that we still are because of the indigenous that was, that continues to be, that can never cease to be. This insistent present of the most remote past, this insurmountable presence of the origin of our history, is something to be recognised in the psychoanalytic sensibility, which, in this, differs from the amnesia that reigns in a dominant psychology in which we are impelled to look only to the future and leave the past behind.

Freud has taught us that the past is not something we can turn our backs on, but something that surrounds us on all sides, that stands between us and our future and that we pass through as we walk forward. The past is not even here something that has simply passed. The past is passing, being as present and as much in the future as the ancestral is in Latin American cultures, in communities, as well as in each one of us.

Freud's own teachings should make us understand that we in Latin America are not only what Freud dealt with in Europe. We are not only what we have been made to be through our colonial subjectivation. We are not only the subjects of European psychoanalytic theory, but also, in a way, the beings referred to in the ancestral knowledge of our continent: knowledge that, in a strange, significant, and scandalous way, is not studied either in our faculties of psychology or in our schools or associations of psychoanalysis.

That we Latin American psychoanalysts and psychologists ignore the indigenous ingredients of mestizaje means, of course, not that these ingredients do not exist, but simply that we do not see or hear them, perhaps by virtue of the blindness and deafness successfully induced by centuries of external and internal colonialism, neocolonialism, and coloniality. It can be conjectured that the success of colonisation, besides ensuring the reception and implantation of psychoanalytic knowledge in Mesoamerica, has as a consequence that we do not fully know what is preserved in Mesoamerican ancestral knowledge: what is most remote and original about us, what we still are of our origin, what we still feel and think, what we somehow know through what we are, for as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987/2016) would say, we know 'things older than Freud' (p. 69). We know such things, but without knowing them, since it is a knowledge that has no place in the colonial order.

In Freudian terms, coloniality prevents us from knowing consciously what we know; it stops us when we try to become aware of our origins; it somehow censors and represses what we would be aware of, making it unconscious. However, the repressed unconscious returns in a symptomatic form, a colonially deformed form, having to be deformed precisely because of the effect of repression. This deformation is the way in which the indigenous often participate in the equation of our baroque, exuberant, garrulous, and variegated mestizaje.

THE QUESTION OF THE ORIGINAL ESSENCE

Our mestizaje symptomatically reveals our indigenous unconscious background as much as it conceals it by disguising and disfiguring it in its baroque nature. In reality, as Luis Villoro (1950/2005) noted in his time, the indigenous only manifests itself to us today in an already Europeanised, mestizo, colonised form. This is something that postcolonial thinkers also remind us again and again, making us bear in mind that we are precisely in a postcolonial moment, after a colonialism that cannot be reversed in order to return to the origin.

The original essence would be irreversibly lost, lost forever, from the postcolonial perspective. From this perspective, we can only pretend that the essence is not lost, as in Gayatri Spivak's (1985/2008) *strategic essentialism*. However, in doing so, we may again be underestimating and belittling the original peoples who have managed to preserve so much of their essence through 'a practically anticolonial way of life' such as that of the Algerian peasant communities who were thus celebrated by Fanon (1961/2002, p. 133). This anticoloniality is not only strategic, but precisely essential, lying in the preservation of a certain essence in the most adverse circumstances.

Of course, the original essence that subsists in rural and indigenous communities can be used strategically against coloniality, but it does not exist in an anticolonial way by virtue of the strategy, for it already exists by itself and is already anticolonial by itself. Its anticoloniality is as essential as its existence. When we relegate this essentiality to pure strategy, we are revealing our opinion of both the original essence and the peoples and movements that claim it and sustain it with great effort, as well as our criteria, its instrumental reason, governed exclusively by means and ends, by strategies and purposes.

The categorical repudiation of any non-strategic essentialism is perhaps also a defensive mechanism, in the Freudian sense of the term, for the purpose of not recognising the truth that is symptomatically revealed in the return of the repressed indigeneity. Undoubtedly, truth reveals itself, as Lacan (1957/1999) would say, in a 'fictional structure', but it does not cease to reveal itself. Considering this revelation, perhaps it is necessary to bet on something that I dare to call *not-only-strategic essentialism*: yes, strategic, lucid, aware of its limits and its fictional structure, but also respectful of the essence and sensitive to its capacity to know something of it, knowing it by going through the colonial fantasy of the absolute and universal, absolutised and universalised European.

FREUDIAN METHOD AGAINST COLONISATION

We know something of the precolonial origin by retroactively reconfiguring it from our position in coloniality. This coloniality does not prevent us from knowing something about the indigeneity that constitutes us, but it does require us to decipher and interpret our

knowledge, since it is a colonised, colonially coded, and symbolised knowledge. For the deciphering and interpretation of our knowledge about our origin, the Freudian method is an essential tool. This method serves us on the path of knowledge towards a truth of origin that is of the kind Freud approached: a truth that can only be known halfway, as enigma and riddle, as fiction and myth.

Needless to say, the approach to the origin also requires other principles of the Freudian method, such as the one of abstinence and especially the one of listening to the speaking subject (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2019). This listening to the subject as subject, unlike the objectifying gaze of psychology, allows indigeneity to manifest itself as what it is and not as the object to which it has always been reduced in colonial history. In contrast to an invasive psychological method in which the colonial invasion continues by other means, the authentically psychoanalytic method should allow us to open a space for the radical otherness of indigenous peoples.

For the approach to indigeneity, perhaps Freud's greatest teaching is to refrain, to be silent, and to listen to what the indigenous have to say, interpreting not exactly what they say, but rather what we hear in what they say. What we must interpret is then our listening and not what the subjects say, our knowledge and not their truth, our interpretation and not the indigenous word. This word only needs to be listened to respectfully, literally, without giving it any Freudian metapsychological meaning.

Without putting Freud's metapsychology into play, his method can help us to listen to the native peoples in such a way that the mere understanding of their word is the discovery of something unique, unparalleled, absolutely different from everything we know. What we discover in this way is irreducibly particular. However, like all truth in its particularity, it is something universal that in this case has a profound meaning for our lives and fascinating resonances with psychoanalysis.

RESONANCES

It is almost as if what Freud glimpsed, especially all that remains invisible to psychology, was already well known to the original peoples. Let me give some examples from the Mexican and Central American context that I draw from a book I wrote about Mesoamerican indigenous conceptions of subjectivity (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2021b).

The Nahua idea of the human subject as *in ixtli in yóllotl*, as face and heart, emphasises the unique singularity of each one. It highlights what is unique in each face, with a physiognomy that distinguishes it from all others, and in each heart, with a desire that also singularises it, all of which is perfectly consonant with the insistence on the singularity of the subject and his/her desire in Freudian casuistry, in case-by-case analysis. Each case is

unique exactly as the *tonalli*, the Nahua soul determined by the instant and circumstances of our birth, is also unique in each subject.

The *tonalli* reappears today as *itonal* in some Nahua communities. Something characteristic of the Nahua *itonal*, as of the Purepecha *mintsita*, is to constitute a corporeal soul. This soul demonstrates a knowledge of the internal structural identity between the psychic and the corporeal, a knowledge profoundly incompatible with the dualism constitutive of psychology, but which also manifests itself in Freud's various monistic concepts, among them the drives that somehow represent the somatic in the psychic, the sublimation that transmutes carnal desires into spiritual inclinations, or the conversion hysterias in which one remembers, fantasises, feels, and thinks with the body.

More precisely, the Freudian postulate of a bodily desiring affectivity underlying rational intellectuality, as expressed in an idea such as rationalisation, finds its Mesoamerican equivalent in the *feel-thinking* of the Nahua, the *neyolnonotza*. It is the same thing that is at stake in emotional-intellectual organs conceived by other indigenous peoples, such as the *yóllotl* or *yolo* of the Nahua themselves, the *senni* of the Popoluca, the *omeeats* of the Huave, the *cuctal* of the Chol, the *yatzil* of the Tojolabal, and the *chulel* of the Tzotzil and Tzeltal. In all cases, we see that the native peoples have always known very well something that Freud has taught us in the West: that our judgements and knowledge are insidiously guided by our desires and our drives, that we enjoy our ideas, that we think with what we feel in our bodies.

It is with the body that we think and feel because we *are* our body. We are not just a soul that has a body, but an animated body, a body that is also a soul. This, difficult to assimilate by conventional psychology, has been clear both to Freud and to the Mesoamerican original peoples, among them the Maya, who thus metaphorically describe the human being in the *Ritual of the Bacabes* as *uinicil te uinicil tun*, being of wood, being of stone, wood and stone as metaphorical representations of the flesh. The subject here is an embodied being as in psychoanalysis and not fleshed out as in psychology.

Another conception of the *Ritual of the Bacabes* that distances us from the psychological perspective by the same gesture by which it brings us closer to psychoanalysis is that of *uayasba*, corresponding to a word, signifier, or symbol that makes us ill and that can only be combated through symbolic resources. The Maya people thus understand, like Freud, that the word cures as well as sickens. They also have a keen understanding, like Freud and Lacan, that illness has a symbolic plot, which manifests itself in symptoms that present what ails us and not only represent it, being causes and not only effects of what we suffer.

By explaining our suffering through the symbolic, the Maya people are decentring it from the individual and re-centring it in a transindividual exteriority. This exteriority, which reminds us of that of the unconscious for Lacan, is that of that communal weft in which Mayan subjectivity understood as *uinic* is woven. It is as *uinic*, in a communal way, that we

can really constitute ourselves as subjects, while individually we are something as insignificant and illusory as the *tlacatl* among the Nahua, as the *ego* in Freud and Lacan.

In psychoanalysis as in Mesoamerican ancestral knowledge, to delve into the consciousness of the *ego* is to go through it and reach a sphere that transcends the imaginary surface of the individual, whether it be that of the *id* and the unconscious in Freud, that of the real and the symbolic in Lacan, or that of the *teyolia* in which everything is connected for the Nahua. The *teyolia* is at the same time the most intimate and the most external, exactly like the Lacanian *extimacy*, and it is also, as in Lacan, something not internal and individual, but external and transindividual. It is like a tree in which the small branches correspond to all spiritual, animal, vegetable, and mineral beings: all united by the unique structure of the tree as by the structure of language in Lacan, with no place for metalanguage in either case. The great difference is that *teyolia* cannot be reduced to the symbolic aspect of culture or to its effects on the psyche of the subject, but rather connects the symbolic and the real, as well as the psychic and the physical, and interiority and exteriority. All of this comes into tension with the Lacanian perspective, showing an initial dissonance such as those we see below.

DISSONANCES

The examples I have just given disclose disconcerting resonances between psychoanalysis and Mesoamerican ancestral knowledge. These resonances should not make us forget the dissonances. I refer to only three of them that are closely linked to each other, that refer to the social, that seem to me to be politically determinant, and that could guide a radical decolonisation, reappropriation, indigenisation, and repoliticisation of psychoanalysis in Mexico, Central America, and perhaps Latin America as a whole.

The first difference is between the indigenous conception of a communitarian subjectivity, perfectly horizontal and leaderless, and the Freudian idea of the group as a vertical horde centred on its leadership (Freud, 1912/1997a, 1921/1997b). This Freudian idea reveals a certain historical difficulty both in contextualising and discussing inequality and in thinking about egalitarianism and communism. The difficulty was overcome by Paul Federn (1919/2002) and by other exponents of the Freudian left (e.g., Fromm, 1934/1970, 1937/2011; Reich, 1933/1973, 1934/1989), but not by Freud, perhaps because of the generation to which he belonged or because of a certain political inclination that was more latent than manifest, more spontaneous than deliberate (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2021c, 2021d, 2023).

Perhaps it must also be explained politically that Freud only developed psychologies of the *ego*, of the *id*, and of the masses composed of *ego*-particles, but not a conception of the *we* such as the ones we find in Mesoamerican ancestral knowledge. In this indigenous

knowledge, the pronoun 'we' designates the original and fundamental subject, as can be seen in the intensive use of words such as the *tik* among the Tzeltal and Tojolabal of Chiapas or the *ndoo* among the Mixtec of Oaxaca. It is as if Mesoamerican indigenous peoples had received Ludwig Feuerbach's (1843/1975) famous lesson on the *we* as the essential form of the human, but the truth is that they did not need this lesson, just as they did not need Karl Marx's (1845/1981) precision on the relational and non-aggregational aspect of the *we*. Those who could benefit from what Feuerbach and Marx teach us are the vast majority of psychoanalysts who dissolve psychoanalytic theory and practice into a typically psychological and liberal individualism that is incompatible with Freud's findings.

Another difference between Freud and Mesoamerican ancestral knowledge is the humanism of the former, with its speciesist-anthropocentric approach, in which non-human beings appear only as representations of the human, such as the *totem* animal. There is no worthy place in psychoanalysis, a subjective and non-objective place, a central and non-subaltern place, for the non-human, be it spiritual, animal, vegetable, or mineral. All this non-human, respectfully considered by the original peoples, always appears in Freud as already humanised, symbolised, assimilated into culture, and re-centred in its human nucleus, thus placing humanity at the centre of the universe, which undoubtedly reflects a real historical experience in the Anthropocene, but an experience that is no less ideological for having a reality in history.

The refutation of humanist ideology surrounds us on all sides in the capitalist system, under the absolute power of capital which decides everything at the expense of humanity, to the point of unstoppably driving this humanity towards annihilation resulting from the devastation of the planet resulting in turn from pollution and overexploitation of resources. It is between capital and nature that the fate of a humankind is being decided. Humankind was finally not as much at the centre as it imagined. Not being at the centre, it may well disappear. There is no ideology in which one can live forever.

The anthropocentrism that puts us at the centre, comparable in this to geocentrism before Copernicus and Galileo, has been wisely avoided by the Mesoamerican peoples, but not by the modern European culture of which Freud is a part. This culture still imagines now, as in Freud's time, that the human is at the centre of the universe. There is here—to speak in Freudian terms—a Copernican revolution pending.

CONCLUSION: AGAINST A COLONIAL USE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

Although Freud continues to put the human at the centre, it is true that at the same time he dissolves it into impersonal, inhuman instances and forces, such as the *id* and drives. This brings Freud and the native Mesoamerican peoples closer again. Proximity is as evident here as in other cases, but it is also as evident as distance in other aspects.

We can emphasise distance or proximity. It doesn't matter what we emphasise as long as we establish a horizontal dialogue between the European and Mesoamerican perspectives. This horizontality would have to proscribe any psychoanalysis of the ancestral knowledge of the native peoples in which this knowledge is put in the place of the object of our knowledge, as if it was not itself a knowledge that is also reflective on itself (see Pavón-Cuéllar and Mentinis, 2020).

It must be well understood that the ancestral knowledge of indigenous peoples has its own concepts and does not require Freudian concepts to show its unfathomable depth of meaning. Nor does it need to be psychoanalysed to make its unconscious conscious. It is not a formation of the unconscious that should be interpreted in Freudian terms.

Ancestral knowledge has its own keys to interpretation, as well as its own forms of self-awareness and reflexivity. All this must be studied, respected, and considered so as not to carry out a colonial exercise of psychoanalysis, so as not to pervert Freudian knowledge by instrumentalising it to colonise other knowledge. Instead of colonising ancestral knowledge, psychoanalysis should rather try to decolonise itself by listening to it, attending to it, and taking it seriously in political implications such as those to which we have referred.

The decolonisation of the Freudian heritage is an urgent task in contexts such as Mesoamerica and Latin America in general. In these contexts, as Helena Maldonado Goti (2017) has noted, what Freud has left us is 'an alien proposal that we must make our own and original' (p. 75). It is necessary and urgent that we reappropriate psychoanalysis, that we reinvent it, that we indigenise it by decolonising it (see Pavón-Cuéllar, 2020, 2021a).

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PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Exploring the mother's geography: On Klein's settler unconscious

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that Kleinian theory is underlined by a 'settler unconscious' by which the trajectory from love, guilt, and reparation is informed by a trajectory defined by seized or taken spaces. Theoretically, the subject is able to reflect on the destruction they caused from the standpoint afforded by an 'external reality,' which in many ways is construed, however implicitly, as dominated space. Politically, we see Klein referring to colonial explorers and settler colonialism to describe psychic development in ways that clearly speaks to how she tacitly internalises settler attitudes to space. Two texts, 'Love, Guilt and Reparation', and 'Early Analysis', are read for how they overlap in settler spatial themes, forming the basis for us to post a settler unconscious in Kleinian thought.

INTRODUCTION: REPARATION AS SETTLEMENT

This article takes as its central point of departure what is arguably the most theoretical statement of settler colonialism in psychoanalysis. This occurs in 'Love, Guilt and Reparation', in which Melanie Klein (1937/1975c) unequivocally likens reparation as a process of territorial settlement upon native destruction. It is a brief but richly telling passage for how it confirms her theory to be embedded in a settler colonial view of the world. For the purposes of this inquiry the passage in question is reproduced here in full:

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We know that in discovering a new country aggression is made use of in the struggle with the elements, and in overcoming difficulties of all kinds. But sometimes aggression is shown more openly; especially was this so in former times when ruthless cruelty against native populations was displayed by people who not only explored, but conquered and colonised. Some of the early phantasized attacks against the imaginary babies in the mother's body, and actual hatred against new-born brothers and sisters, were here expressed in reality by the attitude towards the natives. The wished-for restoration, however, found full expression in repopulating the country with people of their own nationality. (Klein, 1937/1975c, p. 334)

The passage leaves us with two matters underlying Klein's settler worldview that are key for this article. The first is the close connection that is clearly exhibited here between Klein's psychoanalytic thinking and a distinct type of colonialism. This, unlike the more generalised type of developmental coloniality that has plagued psychoanalysis, is not a question of civilisational superiority or inferiority. The coloniality in Klein's outlook is rooted more specifically to settler colonialism. It is about the seizure of other people's land. The second, perhaps more important point to this passage, is the temporal situation presumed in the seizure. It is not the taking of the territory that Klein is interested in. It is how the taking enables the reparative subject. The basic idea is that reparation is a standpoint that is realised only *after* the subject is able to look back to the violence it caused in trying to retain the mother qua phantasized object. It is upon relinquishing the mother, and the guilt in recognising the damage caused in the failure to do so, that the subject could then begin the reparative process. There is no guilt to usher in reparation if there wasn't destruction to realise in the first place. However, the taken for granted likening of this process with colonial settlement shows how Klein thought of her account of psychic development, the passage from love to guilt and reparation, in territorial terms. Where the structural isomorphy between war and the aggressive instincts is already established and largely taken for granted, this passage emphasises the significance of space, namely its violent seizure, in the equation. The psychic relationship to the mother is no longer 'war' in the abstract. It is to mirror the settler's relationship to seized land. The psyche in this case is not simply the amalgamation of unresolved drives. It appears to proceed in a spatial form.

What follows details the settler dimension in Kleinian thought by showing how Klein ultimately theorised a spatial subject wherein the development of the psyche culminates in the crystallisation of what is best termed, to summarise the gist of the passage above, as 'redemptive space'. This, in a basic sense, refers to the space where the subject is no longer beholden to anxieties about the lost mother. However, it is identifiable in a more substantial sense as the space that affords the reparative standpoint wherein the subject, now no longer clamouring to retain the mother, is able to reflect ethically on what it had just done. It is therefore 'redemptive space' for how it holds out the possibility of being an ethical subject in the wake of destruction. Following this, Klein's reparative subject shall also be described as 'a redemptive' subject insofar as it finds its sense of responsibility upon winning the *space* it destroyed. The idea that violence is redemptive because it could eventually lead to a higher

realisation of 'the good', if it isn't obvious yet, is also very much definitive of the settler outlook of conquest where another land is found precisely to fulfil the promise of progress. The ideal of manifest destiny that galvanised the settlement of 'the new world', was pursued precisely out of this belief.

EXPLORING THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE MOTHER'S BODY

Of course, Klein rarely if ever used the terms 'redemption' and 'colonialism', never mind 'settler' or 'settlement' in her writings. Where empire is mentioned, it is more often matter-of-factly describing the world of empires that led to the World Wars which has been documented to significantly influence the logic of Kleinian theorising and its subsequent politics. We have something of a small but telling precedent however where Lacan discussed Klein to mention 'the mapping… of the mother's inner empire' in his 1948 essay 'Aggressiveness and Psychoanalysis' (Lacan, 2006, p. 93). It was left as a brief reference as Lacan did not elaborate on how a colonial logic was operative at a more fundamental level in Klein's view of mothering, space, and the body. This lacuna indeed is where the notion of 'settler unconscious' that I introduce could be a fruitful frame into the set of presumptions that clearly point to a settler view of entitled land whose presence in Kleinian theorising is significant but only ever indirectly.

It is with the settler unconscious in mind that we shall be particularly attentive to the logic at work in two brief but richly evocative moments in Klein's writings. There is firstly the 'geography of the mother's body' coined in 'Early Analysis' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 98). This phrase speaks to how, for Klein, the child relates to the mother in fundamentally spatial terms, that everything the child does in coming to grips with losing the mother is a question of 'spatial ownership'. For the child, in suffering the inability to relinquish the mother, relates to the mother (qua space) as something it cannot have because someone or something else wants it. It is in this spatial threat that the child develops a heightened awareness of its environment as to navigate it as if a geography where the terrain it encounters, however phantasmatically, is coloured in a dynamic of love and hate. Klein's account of the world the child traverses along the way does get rich in its descriptions of the various natural terrain encountered. However, spatiality is apparent in her other brief but also telling evocations of 'dimension', 'movement', 'orientation', and 'territory' as we shall see. With this, a certain attitude of conquest, of the need to win wild space against perceived threats, could be traced to outline the general contours of Klein's theory.

The more colonial sense of the child's relation to the mother's geography could be discerned in the second telling moment of Kleinian thinking, namely, where she speaks of exploration. This refers to what the colonial explorer does where new land is found and traversed. The colonial explorer in fact features prominently where the settler passage above

was written in 'Love, Guilt and Reparation'. The way Klein understands 'explore' in this narrow sense—to indicate an encounter with uncertain lands—further reinforces the geographical nature of the mother's body, as the explorer-child navigates necessarily encounters with threatened spaces in the passage of psychic development. However, Klein also appears to have something more specific in mind with 'exploration'. The child, in coming to terms with the mother's loss, does not simply avail themself of whatever they find. The child does so to eventually distinguish between an internal reality, in a phantasized relationship with the mother, with an external reality that is no longer beholden to the phantasy. It is indeed through this separation that the work of reparation could be done as the child is able to realise that their internal reality is not the full extent of the reality they must be accountable for. The picture 'exploring the geography of the mother's body' paints ultimately is how central the conquest of space is in the developmental picture Klein provides.

We shall begin with contextualising the problems in the above passage by revisiting its source in 'Love, Guilt and Reparation'. However, if this is where the colonial issues are overt, we shall have to turn to an earlier text in 'Early Analysis'—for where the unconscious relationship between the body and space is formed through the child's exploration is detailed—to discern the corresponding spatiality that allows us to think more clearly about Klein's settler unconscious.

LOVE, GUILT AND REPARATION

The child's eventual demarcation between an inside world and an outside world, at times described as 'inner reality' or 'internal reality' and 'outer reality' or 'external reality'—is upheld as an important psychological milestone for Klein because it eventually resolves the traumatic chaos in the loss of the mother that the child suffers as the loss of their source of life and sustenance. This is the loss that makes aggressiveness the fundamental constitution of love as the child violently attempts to seize whatever it can to retain the maternal contact it once had. This is why Klein associates 'the mother' with the child's world—or the world as 'we' readers of psychoanalysis know it—in its totality. The child navigates the world as a search for the lost mother to shape their relationship to objects in light of the loss. Herein lies a tension that shapes the essence of the Kleinian outlook. On one hand, losing the mother is the source of the child's violent attempt to salvage whatever it can of the mother's breast and body. On the other hand, this loss is also productive for how it produces phantasies of substitute love objects that stand in for the mother's tenuous presence and absence. Good objects are objects that can, however momentarily, provide the satisfaction the child craves: The child would treat this object affectionately. Bad objects, meanwhile, are objects that frustrate the child's yearning for satisfaction: These objects will be met with the wrathful passage of the child's destructiveness.

That this distinction is drawn in a state of essential panic means that the child is in effect suffering the inability to determine rightful love and hate. For the child is not only unable to come to terms with the destructive nature of love, they are unable to do so in light of loving and hating what is essentially the same object in the lost mother, whose enigmatic absence is increasingly fantasised with every failure to retrieve her. Objects are consequently reduced to part-objects as they are to be seen as good and bad only in relation to the aggressiveness in the unresolved insecurities rooted to the mother's loss. This inability indeed is where we can begin to trace Klein's reliance on spatial allusions. The child's inability to come to terms with the destructive nature of love sees them projecting material from the aggressiveness of their phantasies onto others, whose difference is construed as 'outside' insofar as they do not directly trigger the child's inner torments. This expulsion of unwanted aggressive elements onto an external object constitutes what has come to be the most well-known Kleinian concept in projection. However, more on the spatiality of it soon.

For now, it is important to note that there is no love beyond aggression. According to Klein, the end point of analysis is to dampen the child's aggressiveness as to love via a reparative gesture. The child's destructive tendencies would be handled by way of the guilt and distress that emerge out of the destruction they inflict. This would pave the way for the need to mend and restore the damaged relations. The child does not stop projecting, owing to the enigmatic relation to the object with which it learned to navigate the world. However, the reparative standpoint does make for an outer world that could be regarded as a space of love: 'Thus making reparation—which is such an essential part of the ability to love—widens in scope, and the child's capacity to accept love and, by various means, to take into himself goodness from the outer world steadily increases' (Klein, 1937/1975c, p. 342. Klein to be sure is presenting a meta-theory. She admits of exceptions and understands that various external factors present variables to the general outlook she presents: 'I cannot do justice to the multiple factors that in the life-long interaction between influences coming from the outer world and the individual's inner forces work together to build up an adult relationship' (Klein, 1937/1975c, p. 313). Regardless, we have enough to conclude that Klein appears committed to an in-built capacity for reparative love to which aggressive love eventually yields. Her following view on love and hate among youths states this belief rather straightforwardly:

> Young people tend to be very aggressive and unpleasant to their parents, and to other people who lend themselves to it, such as servants, a weak teacher, or disliked schoolmates. But when hatred reaches such strength, the necessity to preserve goodness and love within and without becomes all the more urgent. (Klein, 1937/1975c, p. 329)

EXPLORATION AS REDEMPTION

At this point we should note a contradiction that is key for our investigation. On one hand, all of this is to happen in phantasy, that is to say, in the objectal projections and introjections

that happen along the path of coming to terms with the loss of the mother. This is fundamentally about one thing as the child will see everything in light of the trauma of this loss. Indeed, Klein stresses how we never really overcome the loss as it shapes the basic hues of our psychic makeup and struggles. Yet we are to believe that something of a stable 'external world', or 'external reality', in contrast with how the world was coloured through the loss of the mother, could be attained. The question then becomes what exactly is it about the very coming to terms with the mother's loss that makes it so transformative that the guilt could emerge from the ruins of destructive love. There are, to be sure, many familiar Kleinian answers for this. For example, *Narrative of a Child Analysis* mentions the capacity for reversal—that is to say identifying with a parental other enough as to empathise—as a key factor: 'The young child, feeling frustrated, deprived, envious, or jealous, expresses hate and feelings of envy by omnipotently reversing the situation so that he will be adult and the parents neglected' (Klein, 1984, p. 201). However, we read 'Love, Guilt and Reparation' to find at least two presumptions. The essay speaks more obviously about the guilt in the child's realisation of the damage done to the loved object as the key mover of the reparative process. Reparation in this sense is quintessentially ethical because it is sparked by guilt.

However, we read closer to see Klein invested in the redeeming quality of the process of exploring the mother's lost body itself. There is a sense in which 'exploring' is merely a statement of what the child has no other choice to do than to attempt to retrieve the lost mother. There of course should be nothing surprising to this given that this inherent creativity is also the very creativity that makes children's play of psychoanalytic interest. Indeed, unconscious post-traumatic creativity in this essay takes on a more expansive meaning to also include what even motivates the earnest worker. For Klein, the man who searches for a secure livelihood does so:

> Because the sorrow and despair springing from his earliest emotional situations, when he not only felt deprived of food because his mother did not, satisfy his needs, but also felt he was losing both her and her love and protection. (Klein, 1937/1975c, p. 337)

Being unemployed 'deprives him also of giving expression to his constructive tendencies' (Klein, 1937/1975c, p. 337). However, we need not read too far into 'Love, Guilt and Reparation' to see that Klein was working with a particular view of the world, for she also has in mind exploration qua colonial exploration, where the child's developmental play is likened to the literal colonial explorer. In another article, 'A Contribution to the Theory of Intellectual Inhibition', she describes the developmental path through the mother's body as one of conquest, because for the child 'penetrating and exploring are to a great extent synonymous in the unconscious' (Klein, 1931/1975b, p. 240). Even art and scientific discovery, Klein argues, works through the aggressive pursuit of the object that manifests in the child's negotiation with the mother's body, a process which Klein routinely describes in reference to colonialism: 'In psycho-analytic work it has been found that phantasies of exploring the mother's body,

which arise out of the child's aggressive sexual desires, greed, curiosity and love, contribute to the man's interest in exploring new countries' (Klein, 1937/1975c, p. 333).

It is important to emphasise that Klein is not presenting a metaphor. She is not saying that psychic exploration looks like colonial exploration. They share the same structural logic insofar as they inherently move towards a good direction. There is in both an inherent drive to restore. Just as there is a good in post-traumatic creativity, which moves the child to seek repair, so too does colonialism function to do good, 'good' that is colonial terms of conquering another country. The telling passage should be quoted as to not dilute the claim:

> The child's early aggression stimulates the drive to restore and to make good, to put back into his mother the good things he had robbed her of in phantasy, and these wishes to make good merge into the later drive to explore, for by finding new land the explorer gives something to the world at large and to a number of people in particular. In his pursuit the explorer actually gives expression to both aggression and the drive to reparation. We know that in discovering a new country aggression is made use of in the struggle with the elements, and in overcoming difficulties of all kinds. (Klein, 1937/1975c p. 334)

The psychic-colonial isomorphy, however, does not end there. By equating the child's psyche with the colonial explorer's outlook, Klein has positioned her perspective on the side of the coloniser's success. Just as analysis should direct the child to the reparative standpoint so too must colonialism be successful in dominating the land where real, ostensibly non-hysterical, relations can form: To demonstrate the redeeming quality of exploration, Klein compares the colonial explorer's ingenuity with the native's attitude to land. The explorer is able to find a new world (and therefore make up for the loss of the mother) upon braving through 'a struggle with the elements' (Klein, 1937/1975c, p. 334). This is to be contrasted with natives who have no choice but to live with the elements. These are 'people who strive with the severity of nature' (pp. 337–338). They still 'serve nature herself' and thus find no need to discover 'her': 'In not severing their connection with her they keep alive the image of the mother of the early days' (p. 338). The loss of the mother in this regard spurs the explorer to search the new land that would compensate for the loss: 'the explorer is seeking in phantasy a new mother in order to replace the real one from whom he feels estranged, or whom he is unconsciously afraid to lose' (p. 338).

Just as the infant proceeds along the developmental path to differentiate objects like an explorer would discover a new world, so too does the death drive consume the object as how the explorer would destroy those who 'do not belong' to the land. This in many ways reiterates David Eng's influential critique, in which the problematic passage above is read as the fundamentally exclusionary nature of the child's object world, as the will to repair enacts a segregation between those deserving of repair, construed within the object relations that colours the child's narcissism on one hand and those who are not, subjects who—failing to qualify as objects worthy of love to begin with—are 'left to perish in the dark regions beyond the circle of love and repair?' on the other (Eng, 2016, p. 5). However, our attentiveness to

the settler dimension of Klein's scheme—in the exploratory virtues of the process—speaks to the anxieties of exclusion, that the explorer cannot simply assume the production of good objects worthy of love will just happen. Where guilt is a more fundamental ethical given, exploration as Klein has it is riddled with uncertainties, lending the reparative process to be more tenuous and thus more prized. If it can be ethical it is because it can reflect upon something it won after destruction. The repopulation over native land—and the difficulties of displacement that makes such a discovery worthy—metaphorises the contingencies of the process that makes the conquest of spaces a virtue precisely for it allows for the ethical reflection to happen. For only a new *dominated* space can make up for the lost mother just as only the destruction of native land can enact repopulation *after* native destruction. Exclusion is a virtue in other words because it redeems the subject.

THE LIBIDINAL DETERMINATION OF GEOGRAPHY

It is true that this overt settler colonial attitude in 'Love, Guilt and Reparation' does lend the article an anomalous quality. Klein appears to have taken no interest in the colonial context in writings prior to the essay. However, locating the coloniality where Klein speaks of 'exploration' allows us to consider her account of space in an early piece entitled 'Early Analysis'. While coloniality is far less evident here, the essay does resonate with our inquiry for containing the phrase 'geography of the mother's body', a figuration that features quite evidently in 'Love, Guilt and Reparation' as we have seen. Thus while 'exploration' or 'explorer' are not literally mentioned, Klein does identify 'Early Analysis' as where she accounts for the 'libidinal determination of geography' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 72), namely, where the antagonism and chaos of the drives, coloured by the anxieties of losing the mother, are resolved through the ability to think spatially wherein the world is no longer to be seen in light of losing the mother's womb and could be instead be seen as a standalone external reality. It resonates significantly, as we shall see, with why Klein could uphold the colonial explorer as a model for the child exploring the mother's body. The ability to stabilise spatial thinking is seen as a developmental achievement, much like the explorer's ability to ward off the new land it discovered from alien threats. In this regard 'Early Analysis' offers much of the bases with which we can think of the 'unconscious' moving Klein's statement about the virtues of settlement.

The idea of exploration in particular is presumed in the technical contrast Klein draws in 'Early Analysis' between inhibition and sublimation. Inhibition—more theoretically described as the 'neurotic inhibitions of talents' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 77)—is a problem of repressed *ideas* associated with certain otherwise pleasurable activities. The specific way in which this is framed already poses a link between the psychic dimension of creative bodily expression, insofar as inhibition deserves our attention because it entails the reduction of a subject or child's capacity to move enjoyably. The spatial nature of this problem is hinted early on when

Klein construes the problem of 'movement' as a problem of pursuing space. Thus her examples are as much about 'playing at ball with hoops, skating, tobogganing, dancing' and the like where physical dexterity is key, with walking on 'the road to school' which casts the problem as a broadly spatial one (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 77). Klein would detail this through a host of examples showing children struggling with direction and movement where their sense of space is key. The problem of being in school, from laziness to slow learning, which are not so much problems of activity as they are problems of locations and situations, is also presented as an example of inhibition. These examples are standard Kleinian insofar as child analysis presumes that the child's play is in many ways a form of world building for the psyche. However, our interest in the conquest presumed in her evocation of exploration should go further to note how Klein was working with a certain perceived attitude to 'space' as a crucial indicator of psychological development. Space is a problematic 'idea' for the child. Consequently, phantasies of space as it manifests in their movement will constitute a crucial aspect of child analysis.

To this, Klein adds the corporeal nature of the problem, as it is rooted to children's inability to handle their drives where the need for an economic handling of their excesses is met with repression instead. What inhibitions show is a problem with 'libidinal cathexis, and genital symbolism always played a part in it' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 77). The child is unable to move and play because 'a strong primary pleasure' was 'repressed on account of its sexual character' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 77). Klein then stated clearly that 'normal' is to be determined to the extent to which the capacity for pleasure could be attained in activities, where their sexual nature is ostensibly less overpowering. The implication is key and must be stated early on. The child is such that their corporeality sees them never 'at home', as it were. The psychoanalytic subject consequently is never really 'settled', and this is because space is never something they can take for granted.

With this we can now move on to why space should even emerge as a corporeal issue. Children fantasise about a great many things and yet Klein would be especially attentive to its spatial manifestations. Why one might ask should space be the ultimate substratum on which all phantasies rest. This is because Klein roots the origins of repression in the spatial anxieties of overcoming the attachment to the mother's womb. Space in other words is a problem to be fantasised about because it is the primary loss that structures the child's relationship with the mother:

> I came across the fear in a child that when he was on the ice it would give way beneath him or that he would fall through a hole in a bridge—both obviously birth anxiety. Repeatedly I found that these fears were actuated by the far less obvious wishes—brought into play as a result of the sexual-symbolic meaning of skating, bridges, etc.—to force his way back into the mother's body by means of coitus, and these wishes gave rise to the dread of castration. (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 82)

The insecurity, however, is not so much in the absence of a stable place. It is that the dread of castration sees to it that the child feels continuously unmoored, that is to say, never able to overcome the attachment to the mother's womb. This inability to overcome displacement, despite being able to acquire new substitute objects, would be the basis of hysterical symptom formation. Inhibition cannot be overcome where new activities potentially trigger attachments to the mother's body:

> In the cases I have mentioned of pleasure in motion—games and athletic activities—we could recognize the influence of sexual-symbolic meaning of the playing field, the road, etc. (symbolising the mother), while walking, running and athletic movements of all kinds stood for penetrating into the mother. (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 86)

DISPLACEMENT

Note how the symptoms foretell the specific nature of the spatial problem that the child grapples with, that Klein will make the focal point of her theorising. Birth is conceived from the onset as a fundamental *displacement*, understood literally to mean a loss of space. In fact, Klein herself presents displacement—she italicises the word no less—as the problem with inhibition. The cathexis to consume the mother—moved by excess drives—is continuously displaced upon the threat of castration. Pleasure is continuously sought somewhere else in discrete contact with momentary 'success'. The spatial solution also logically follows from this premise. The excess drives are to be consequently stabilised because the child was born, and remains confined, within a state of perpetual displacement.

The implication of this problem, which speaks to the importance of space in Klein's theorising, is that the inhibited child has no proper conception of the 'outside world'. He is stuck in a masturbatory dynamic where the mother is found in everything, especially through his own body: 'the feet, the hands and the body, which carry out these activities and in consequence of early identification, are equated with the penis, served to attract to themselves some of the phantasies which really had to do with the penis and the situations of gratification associated with the object' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 86). It is to realise phantasy in the 'external world', conceived as an alternative to the perpetual return to the mother, that the notion of sublimation is presented. More specifically put, if hysterical symptom formation occurs when the child is unable to enjoy the object on account of his attachment to the mother's body, sublimation occurs when the movement no longer internalises the mother. This in many ways is about de-maternalising the object: They are 'out there' moving in a domain beyond the subject's anxieties. However, it is conceived 'outside', more properly speaking, because satisfaction would be had in the activity through the object itself instead of a sought after release of pleasure for a forbidden body, 'in pleasure in motion rather than organ-pleasure in itself' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 86).

As an example, Klein turns to Freud's reading of a fantasy by Leonardo Da Vinci, specifically the one of Da Vinci's mouth being opened by a vulture's tail. Freud took this to reflect Leonardo's infantile theory of sexuality around his mother possessing a penis, which thus led to his obsessional neurosis. Leonardo's artistic pursuits provided a solution because it was able to transpose the neurosis onto the movement of objects in the world:

> In Leonardo's case not only was an identification established between nipple, penis and bird's tail, but this identification became merged into an interest in the motion of this object, in the bird itself and its flight and the space in which it flew. (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 87)

With this pleasure in motion the body too is free to find pleasure, however 'deflated', in objects beyond the anxious body: 'Leonardo's genital activity, which played so small a part as far as actual instinctual gratification was concerned, was wholly merged in his sublimations' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 88). With this example, Klein is able to summarise his theory of how sublimation, conceived as the clear grasp of things as they move in the world, relieves the hysteric's suffering 'if the interest in orientation is not repressed, pleasure and interest in it are retained, and the extent of the development of the faculty is then proportionate to the degree of success attending the search for sexual knowledge' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 99). The ability to conceive of such a world beyond the womb does not simply resolve the anxiety of perpetual displacement. Klein even presents it as the basis of speech and writing.

Where Da Vinci showed how sublimation is shaped out of the pleasurable appreciation of moving objects, Klein would turn to his case studies to detail the pursuit of movement in an external world works to solve inhibition. Key is Klein's discussion of seven-year-old Fritz whose case began with how he enjoys wildly moving 'pipi', the name he gave his penis. One fantasy, for example, 'consisted in being able, without touching it with his hand, to make the Pipi appear with a jerk through the opening in his knickers by twisting and turning his whole body' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p 91). Klein does not mention it, but the territorial conquest entailed is quite evident. Fritz played with his Pipi to the effect of creating phantasies of entire worlds. This was seen especially in his invention of vehicles placed in imagined townships in which Klein noticed how his fantasy of filling up petrol reflected a fantasy of inserting semen into the mother.

The point is that the internalisation of maternal phantasies translates to the inability to pursue the mother in reality, and this translates to a certain stasis in real life:

> Like the inhibition against walking, games and the sense of orientation, its main determinant was the repression, based on castration anxiety, of the sexual-symbolic cathexis common to all these interests, namely, the idea of penetrating into the mother by coitus. (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 100)

Thus, Klein notices however that this fascination with moving Pipi around is rooted to his fixation on roads and vehicles that went alongside his fear of actually walking outside. He would play with motorcycles, cars, and trains but would be reluctant to actually go outside in

the world among others. However, analysis soon 'removed his distaste for play' and Fritz eventually 'developed a more lively feeling for orientation in space' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 93). Space was no longer represented in light of his fear of letting go of the mother and Fritz was able to explore 'the mother' via the world as it is 'out there'. Fritz would gradually speak more and develop an interest in music, both of which are taken as his extensions 'outside'. Mother was still evoked but no longer as a representation within fantasy but among the objects of play. Indeed, what we get is a richer understanding of other objectal possibilities in the world, 'Thus we found that his sense of orientation, which had formerly been strongly inhibited but now developed in a marked manner, was determined by the desire to penetrate the mother's body and to investigate it inside' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 98). It goes without saying the geographical element of Fritz's play clearly allowed him to symbolise the mother's body as different spaces. The mother is relinquished as a relinquished body and birthing is no longer regarded as a traumatic loss.

EXPLORATION

Klein does not single out the 'term' exploration for scrutiny but the fundamentally spatial effect of losing the mother sees Klein clearly speaking of the necessity and virtue of exploration as a way to stabilise space. Thus, she describes a key characteristic of uninhibited play as the ability to explore space as to manipulate it: Klein was particularly moved by how Fritz explored bedsheets—that is to say, playing with the spatial fantasies it afforded—as how he traversed its entire length and breadth to create a journey which he likened to an underground trek. The world he created under the bedsheets staged an elaborate train track that Klein took to prove that his body was indeed enjoying 'pleasure in motion'. The sexual curiosity that was concentrated in part-objects was enlarged, in ways that clearly show conquest:

> His original pleasure in roads corresponded to the desire for coitus with the mother, and therefore could not come into full operation until the castration-anxiety had been resolved. Similarly we see that, in close connection with this, his love of exploring roads and streets (which formed the basis of his sense of orientation) developed with the release of the sexual curiosity which had likewise been repressed owing to the fear of castration. (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 96)

With this exploratory dynamic, sublimation is shown to significantly hinge a great deal on the ability to indulge in a pleasure in motion by which the body extends itself to mother qua in a richer *field* of phantasy. Here Klein brings the link between movement, space, and geography full circle for it was clear by this point that geography was the seat of Fritz's overall ability to relate to the world: 'Apart from the interest in geography I discovered that it was one of the determining factors in the capacity for drawing and the interest in natural science and everything to do with the exploration of the earth' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 99). This is important to note where inhibition speaks to the opposite wherein space is phantasized as a

terrain of threats. The continuous encounter with threats in fact accounts for the displacement the inhibited subject suffers. This is evident where Fritz relapsed into his inhibitive state where phantasies presumed a geography of dangers. Klein does not hesitate to describe it in terms of the natural terrain that underlines his inhibition. Fritz expressed a fear of trees which took the form of phantasies of being hit by falling trees. He also feared the fragility of an imaginary bridge whose existence was only to intensify his fear of falling into a hole. A thick piece of string was confused for a snake. The terrain of 'mother space' that was previously free for the taking contrasts with the terrain of new more threatening space to where there was nowhere really to go. Other people also appeared as obstacles. Fritz feared going outside to encounter the boys who once disturbed him. Conversely, geographical sense is also to be upheld as a measure of inhibition: 'Partial inhibitions of this faculty, e.g. interest in geography and orientation, with a greater or lesser lack of capacity, proved to depend on the factors which I regard as essential to the forming of inhibitions in general' (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 99).

It is with the case of Fritz in any case that we find Klein's footnote about the 'geography of the mother's body'. This takes for granted that the child comes to learn about the shape of 'the outside world' through negotiating their unconscious attachment to the mother's body that torments their inner world. This is the premise for her subsequent theorisations of how a stable conception of the outside world, however tenuous it may be, is the condition for the child's healthier relation to others as whole objects rather than remnants of the mother's part objects. The healthy conception of the inner world in other words is attained through the epistemic grasp of an objective outer world. However, it is important to note that the Fritz example also points to a particular way in which this geography was realised, for the relation to the mother and geography is not metaphorical. We know by now that it is a geography that is realised particularly through the aggressive attempt to retain whatever semblance of contact with the mother's body that was believed to be had. It is a geography that sees the body explored in literal correspondence with things in the world. However, this entails the crystallisation of a clearly marked boundary between an 'inside' and an 'outside':

> His sense of orientation, which had formerly been strongly inhibited but now developed in a marked manner, was determined by the desire to penetrate the mother's body, and to investigate it inside, with the passages leading in and out and the processes of impregnation and birth. (Klein, 1923/1975a, p. 98)

The inner world in other words is to be stabilised only once the drives have arrived at a proper conception of an 'outside world'. With this link between body and space we are able to understand how Klein presents the passage from the inside to the outside as the condition for reparation.

CONCLUSION

Where 'Love, Guilt and Reparation' speak of the child's arrival of the 'outside world' of reflection in terms of the explorer's conquest of new lands, 'Early Analysis' is able to provide us the basis with which we can understand the significance of spatial and territorial thinking in the developmental picture Klein was working with. The tenuousness of spatial thinking—where the spatial quality of sublimation is seen to be something earned through uninhibited play—resonates similarly with the ways in which Klein speaks of reparation as a territorial achievement. The centrality of reparation to redeem the subject's destructive tendencies speaks to the redemptive temporality presumed in the story of psychic development Klein provides, that some good will be met at the end of the day. Insofar as these texts and concepts are crucial for our understanding of Kleinian thought, we can no longer read her today without acknowledging the settler unconscious.

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NOTE FROM THE FRONT LINE

Decolonial approaches to multidisciplinary supervision: A case extract

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ABSTRACT

This text offers a summary of experiences in multidisciplinary supervision with workers of public health and social care networks in Brazil. Based on the contributions of diagnostic reasoning offered by clinical knowledge and listening as a central element in a psychoanalytically oriented work, a space for supervision was proposed for workers in multiple areas of health and social care, seeking to think of ways of handling cases that go beyond institutional protocols and bureaucracies, and that from a decolonial perspective can propose transformative solutions to the reality of people assisted by public policies. The case of the child Theo is presented, based on the story of the educators of a service of care and strengthening of bonds for children from 3- to 14-years-old, in a peripheral and vulnerable territory of a big city in Brazil.

KEYWORDS: decolonial approaches; psychoanalysis; supervision; multidisciplinary; public policies

It was a supervision day, in a space made up of workers from different health and social work services, professionals from SUS (Unified Health System) and SUAS (Unified Social Assistance System), in Brazil. We came from a sequence of meetings in which we made brief exercises of clinical reasoning from the daily experiences of the workers: What is presented as a symptom? What information do we have about the case to think about the field of causes? In addition, from this correlation between cause and symptom, what could possible therapeutic treatments be? It was an interdisciplinary exercise, borrowing clinical reasoning and taking it 'out of the clinic' as a way of broadening the analytical capacity of professionals in health and social care networks.

The case manager was Laudelina, an educator who has been working in the same institution for more than seven years: an out-of-school service that is part of the Unified Social

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Assistance System (SUAS) in a city in the interior of the State of São Paulo, Brazil. The service is located in a peripheral and vulnerable area, made up of squats and of interest to the real estate market. Laudelina has a strong personality, a firm word, and an admirable ethical-political commitment. She does not submit to the logic of professional hierarchisation imposed by the institutions, which determines by salary and profession who has the right to issue opinions or verdicts. Thus, on a scale, doctors and judges, psychologists, social workers, nurses, and educators form the pyramid of knowledge within the social care and health networks, in which the staff dealing with cleaning are far from being understood as part of the teams. In SUAS, things get even worse when the hierarchy between services prevails. In these cases, the opinions of a medium complexity service—even if they have no material basis for an opinion—become the verdict on the person attended to in primary care services.

From the very first meeting of the training activities, Laudelina and her co-worker, Tito, listened with as much involvement as they spoke and showed an acute awareness of how public policies on violence operate. Laudelina spoke at a meeting where we were doing a reflection exercise based on the questions 'when have I ever suffered any kind of discrimination?' and 'when have I ever discriminated against anyone?' She told of the time she arrived at an institution for a job interview and asked the security guard at the entrance where the office was, who sent her to the inpatient ward, as if it were a voluntary hospitalisation. It was only when the psychologist called her after a while of waiting and asked her where her personal belongings were that she was able to make sense of the suspicion that she had been in the wrong place, and, hopefully, had cleared up the misunderstanding before she might have been admitted to the psychiatric ward. Laudelina defines herself as a woman of mixed skin.

Throughout Laudelina and Tito's service supervision activities, we hear of the work of constant struggle and resistance aimed at caring for the children of the territory. In addition to dealing with the problems experienced by families and children on a daily basis, they still had to deal with a deafened social care network, which acts independently of the interests of the population and 'destroys in one hour of conversation with the children's family what took us three years to build', as stated by a teammate in another supervision. Once, when questioned by a psychologist who referred her to the psychology ethics board to say that Laudelina's management was wrong, she replied, 'I am an educator and I don't need advice to have ethics'.

It was in this spirit that we listened to the case that was being presented in supervision that day. They had decided to bring that case because they had already been trying to exercise clinical reasoning with other colleagues in the service for a few weeks to reflect on the management of that child's case, considered by the team as the 'chaos' of the service.

Theo (or *Macumba*, a derogatory nickname from his family) was a boy of about 10 years old, and he had been frequenting the service with his siblings for a long time. Laudelina and

Tito then told us that the boy had the power to disrupt any activity in which he participates. Suddenly, he will fight with another child, both for competition and to protect someone else. He doesn't respect anyone on the team and calls them all kinds of rude names. At this point, we asked Laudelina not to be shy about saying the words that Theo said when he called her names, reminding her that signifiers matter. Most were words that referred to sexual matters that offended women.

Laudelina said everyone on the team lost patience with him, that he drove her crazy. However, she noticed that he was careful with his other teammates and his brother, when they weren't fighting. If someone gave him a piece of candy, he was quick to say, 'Do you have another one for me to give to my teammate too?' The child often asked to be held and claimed that no one wanted him. When he went to his grandmother's house, he would hear people say, 'Here comes Theo's macumba'.

Macumba is a term associated with Afro-Brazilian cults and the practices carried out within these cults. Initially the word 'macumba' described a percussion instrument of African origin and a 'macumbeiro' was the individual who played this instrument. The prejudices spread by Christianity mean that macumba is mistakenly understood as sorcery, magic, an offering to the devil, and the term used to refer to bad things.

A few weeks ago, Theo came in with a cut on his foot and said his mother had sent him to the service to have it treated. The staff became angry—'that wasn't nursing'—and started saying 'how could his mother not even take care of the cut on her son's foot?' Using the clinical thinking resources she had learned, Laudelina began to wonder why that scene bothered her and the rest of the staff so much, as from time-to-time other children would ask for a band-aid, gas, or bandages because they had hurt themselves on the soccer field in front of the restroom.

Laudelina listened and realised that the presence of the mother at the scene was a major disruptive factor that prevented the team from dealing with a simple bandage. Together with Tito and another colleague, they began to listen to how the service's 'mother ideal' affected the way problems were handled. It was the first step in repositioning themselves, taking a different interest in the mother and listening to her. It was a turning point.

Instead of focusing on the mother who 'did not appear in the service', who 'did not fulfil her obligations as a mother', Laudelina decided to talk to her on the phone, with a willingness to listen. Why was the child called Theo Macumba? What was this nickname for a boy understood as chaos? Right at the beginning of the call, she heard the fights in the house between the siblings, of whom there were seven. We were able to think together about this oversight: What was it like to be a woman, with seven children, who had a relationship with a man who was not their father? What were the narratives about that woman in the family, in the community? Could it be that Theo's nonsensical swearing was related to things he heard at home? About his mother?

In conversations with her mother, Laudelina could hear about Theo Macumba, the disorder, the chaos. Additionally, given time to listen to her, she could hear the mother say, 'he looks like me'. With Laudelina, the mother was able to talk about both Theo and herself. The child who is not only rude, who swears, but also the one who shares the candy he has, who gives away his clothes to other children who have less than he does, and who cares about his neighbour.

We speak then of the possibility of subverting the team's reading of the mother's 'neglect' to think that the service can function as a place of reference for Theo and his mother, who cannot count on other support structures, such as the children's father, for example, since her husband does not participate in the upbringing of her children. The mother and her children are neglected by the father, of whom there is no news. The mother moves from the position of being neglectful to one of seeking support for a task she cannot do alone. She needs to be able to rely on primary care services and the whole support network, and Theo, a child, not only needs to be able to rely on them, but is much more dependent than she is on education and care policies to develop. In that service, a service of coexistence and strengthening of bonds, Theo would find the possibility of establishing secure ties, even for conflict.

Laudelina then related another scene, in which they both entered one of the service's offices and Theo started throwing all the papers in the air, until Laudelina said they would have to call the cleaning lady. When Theo realised that the action would not be against her, but against a third party, he immediately picked up all the papers. Laudelina's hypotheses about the boy's concerns for those close to him were confirmed and pointed to an excellent prognosis.

> The problem now, and why we took the case to supervision, is that Theo wants to come every day to the service, and it is not possible, he can only come once, because of the shifts we have to do to comply with the pandemic guidelines. I have talked to the management to have him come twice, the coordination team has authorised it, but is it fair to the other children? What do we do?

Together we were able to elucidate on the figure of the father, the paternal function, the relationship of the law in the constitution of the child and how that space seemed to act as an edge and contour to support Theo's body in its relationship with others. Was the service the space to explore the limits? If so, how was it to be situated? As a rigid, can't-do law, or through other perspectives of law, as a bond, marked more by solidarity and less by authoritarianism. Theo came to the service reflecting the anomie of the many people live in his territory—highly vulnerable, neglected by the State, and lacking public policies really aimed at transforming the local reality. Theo, like his territory, constituted by occupations and in permanent dispute with the great business capital of the region, has no contours or borders. He arrived externalising his discomfort, as so many 'disorderly' children do. A discomfort that belongs to everyone, including the team that questioned its own limits within

the network and the territory and felt annoyed by the bureaucracies. Like Theo, they wanted to launch protocols into the air, denouncing cynicism, what does not work, and what is designed not to work in public social care policies.

We thus point to the importance of building contours rather than forcing obedience. 'Theo is a partner', we said. We were able to orient the perspective that the service should be for the users, in this case the children, and not against them. We pointed out to Laudelina how the conflicts she told us about since her arrival had to do with her ethic of working for and by the children, and not for the state: 'Theo is your partner'.

We also wondered if the mother's earlier demands might not be related to putting the service in the place of the father, the place of the provider. We did not get very far with that, leaving everyone to engage with psychoanalytic theory in his or her own way, respecting the developmental times of each person, and always being careful not to fall into alien interpretations. It is up to each person to decide how they want to connect with psychoanalysis and with a deeper study of their metapsychology. What we seek to guarantee as supervisors is a minimum structure of thought so that ideas and affections can circulate in favour of listening to the users and overcoming the forms of relationship imposed by capitalism.

Thinking about the service-environment and Theo-companion, we discussed the possibility of a game in which he would be invited to 'join the team as a member'. That way, the other three days he would help in welcoming the other children instead of being welcomed, occupying a role that was already his in the peer dynamics: a caretaker role. 'Do macumba together', I said, summoning the signifier to re-signify the word. Another coordinator resorted to land epistemologies and said: '*Erê* welcomes. Gives consultations. *Erê* is an *exu-mirim*, a line of flight, a life drive that needs a contour, a lap. *Exu* is the owner of the crossroads. And every entity needs an *ekedi*. The *ekedi* is the one who takes care of the orisha while it incorporates, who takes charge, who directs everything. Theo is *erê* and he is *ekedi*. He needs contour and he gives contour'. Together with Theo, we proposed to the team to recover and re-signify the 'macumba' outside the prejudices imposed by Christianity, studying other epistemologies and cosmovisions.

Based on the tasks that the child could help with in relation to the demands of the service, we thought together:

> Theo is also someone who listens. You could organise tasks related to what he hears. He hears that people are hungry, so you could organise a garden, for example, to produce food to be used in the service meals, and he could be in charge of planting, watering, and harvesting. Be, in this way, the keeper of the garden. In this way he will be able to strengthen the bond, but without it being a place of privilege in relation to the other children, as it will also be a place of responsibility.

A month after this supervision, in another meeting, Laudelina and Tito talked about Theo again. They continued to supervise each other with others on the team and to think about management strategies. They recounted how Theo had found a way to ask for edges by saying, 'Are you going to take me to the upstairs room?'—a place he had sometimes been invited to go so he could chat with Laudelina or Tito whenever he did chaotic things. What might have been heard as fear of being scolded came to be understood as a desire to be taken to that place where he would be alone, would be listened to, and could distinguish between him and the other children, and between him and his siblings.

The 'upstairs room', the place where the educators took some children to talk when it was necessary to get them out of the mess, also served as an outline for other children. One of them, upon entering the room with Tito, sat in the chair, asked him for two minutes, closed his eyes with his hands together and after a while opened his eyes saying, 'that's it, I've aligned the chakras', and went back to the playground to participate in the activity he had previously been unable to bond with. Tito did not have to do anything more than accompany him on his journey.

The bond between Theo and Laudelina grew stronger. In the library he chose a book called *Pererê*, which told the story of Saci, a Brazilian folkloric character, who is black, has only one leg, and does a lot of naughty things. Laudelina read to him about Saci's characteristics, telling him about his tricks and 'whirlwinds'. Theo, who could not yet read or write, asked how to spell and then they drew the letters on the floor together. Laudelina suggested that they write a letter to the Saci, which was hung on a tree and answered by another educator, at Laudelina's request. 'People say the Saci doesn't exist', Theo told Laudelina, who replied, 'I have seen the Saci. Have you seen the Saci?' 'I've seen it too. But they say it's bad', replied Theo. During supervision we were able to talk about the importance of scenes like this to denaturalise racism and other forms of discrimination, explaining in the child's language the associations between being bad and being black in Brazilian society. Theo asked: 'Why am I neither black nor white? Take a picture of me so we can see my colour'. Theo asked to write Saci on the floor—Theo asked to inscribe his colour in the world.

Laudelina and Tito were excited to tell us the news. They were thrilled with the possibility of their own work. They laughed and told stories about the adventures of Theo Macumba and Theo Saci. Laudelina sighed, 'We couldn't handle two Theos'. Tito exclaimed: 'There are not two Theos, but there are John, Paul, etc.'. Everyone burst out laughing, and then we were able to talk about these manoeuvres of the social welfare and education services to turn children into one thing, an amalgam, the mafia, preventing them from existing as singular subjects.

A few weeks later, Laudelina told us that Theo had asked to learn to write. He wanted to go back to school. He asked Laudelina to get him a notebook and decorate the cover because he wanted to do 'that thing that people write about their lives'.

—You want to write a diary?

—Yes, I want to write a diary.

—But you don't know how to write yet, so how are you going to do it?

—I ask other people to help me write for me while I'm still learning. I tell them what I want to write and they write it. You help me, and then there's my neighbour.

Theo has not only progressed in his literacy; he has invited the world to become literate with him. He is a community articulator. He used to say he wanted to collect cans. Now he says he wants to be an educator like Laudelina. Necessary identifications to give way to desire.

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