

A “Living Depersonalization”

Fanon and Mannoni on Colonialism’s Psychic Violence

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In “Colonial War and Mental Disorders,” Frantz Fanon’s harrowing final chapter to *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), the Martinican psychiatrist analyzed the “many, sometimes ineffaceable wounds” inflicted during Algeria’s War of Independence, when the nation’s *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) tried and ultimately succeeded in overturning more than a century of French colonial rule (249).

The war was particularly brutal, lasting eight years (1954–62) and fomenting widespread slaughter and torture, with cities routinely under siege, verified massacres, and with civilians often made targets and taken as hostages. The chapter is difficult to read for the many atrocities it documents—events described recently by French President Emmanuel Macron as “unforgivable” (*BBC*). By then the FLN’s leading political theorist, Fanon’s job as *médecin-chef* in Algeria’s Blida-Joinville psychiatric hospital included treating the psychological distress of French officers, some of them ordered to torture the very FLN members whose anticolonial resistance he steadfastly supported. After resigning from the position, describing his conscience as “the seat of unpardonable debates,” Fanon condemned the “systematized de-humanization” of Algerians he also was treating. Subsequently deported for his public statement, he rejoined the FLN full-time from neighboring Tunisia (qtd. in Azar).

Fanon’s multilayered account of the war and its legacy of fear and horror helped him extrapolate many of colonialism’s structural and psychic effects, particularly on the colonized as a group, and those caught up in its unpredictable and at times unremitting violence. “Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity,” he writes of policies adopted by an occupying France, which since 1830 had turned the port and capital city of Algiers into an expanded military base, “colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: ‘In reality, who am I?’” (Fanon 1961: 250).

That question is at once so primal and all-encompassing that it has immediate but also far-reaching implications for all who have lived under colonial rule. It includes the psychiatric disorders Fanon identified and diagnosed as tied to the ensuing malaise, among them a generalized “North-African syndrome,” intense “reactionary psychoses” afflicting those on both sides of the conflict, and a “frequent malignancy of . . . [associated] pathological processes” (252). As psychosomatic complaints (rather than, say, imaginary illnesses), the disorders can “persist for months on end,” he writes, and “take various forms”:

Sometimes they are visible as states of agitation which sometimes turn into rages; sometimes deep depression and tonic immobility with many attempted suicides; or sometimes finally anxiety states with tears, lamentations, and appeals for mercy. In the same way the form which the delusions take are many and divers [*sic*]. We may find a delusion of persecution against the French who want to kill the new-born infant or the child not yet born; or else the mother may have the impression of imminent death, in which the mothers implore invisible executioners to spare their child.

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“Invisible executioners,” easily confused at the time with real ones. The nightmare of the Algerian war includes the memory of a man who asks for a pencil, then writes cryptically on a notepad: “I have lost my voice; my whole life is ebbing away.” Fanon describes the years-long onslaught as a “living depersonalization” for those whose land and psyche remains occupied (262). The myriad daily threats, insults, and injuries (to self and person, people and nation) create a hardening “kernel of despair” (293). The clearest but far from exclusive sign of the disorder, he writes, is a massive, self-directed attack on the ego—a persistent, in many cases intractable volley of hostilities lodged at one’s person and family, community and nation. While these long predate actual war, crucially they also help pave the way for it.

The chapter includes several harrowing case studies, including the meeting—likely at Blida-Joinville—of a French policeman seeking treatment for depression tied to his role in inflicting torture and “one of his victims, an Algerian patriot . . . suffering from stupor” from the exact same violence (264). Doubtless, it was witnessing such exchanges that led Fanon to resign from his post, aid the resistance, and write *The Wretched of the Earth* as a searing contribution to anticolonial psychology—the kind that could theorize the conditions for independence and full psychic emancipation from centuries of predefined roles, beliefs, and internalized prejudice.

“The violence of colonial war becomes hallucinatory and spectral,” writes Fanon scholar David Marriott of the increasingly dark and horrifying chapter, “because it haunts everything: every intimacy, and every social relation; even there where it is not, there is no defense against the screams heard or imagined, the accusations coming from those murdered, tortured, or both. There is a vertiginous malignancy to these hallucinations, both in the sense of depth and in the sense of a life being lost, precisely, by means of these disturbances to the life as lived” (Marriott: 181).

The same “vertiginous malignancy” not only torments those embroiled in the conflict, but comes to define the colonial relation *par excellence*, as Fanon was quick to perceive and this chapter puts under a microscope. With what effect? On the one hand, notes Marriott, “it appears that the ‘wounds’ left by colonial war are not representations but a series of identifiable (vengeful) revenants that cannot be renounced, that appear at the height of anguish, and that return as a malady of war” (178). They can take over and re-occupy minds anxious to overthrow them, raising questions about an identity—perhaps a nation—that declares itself rid of them. On the other hand, continues Marriott, “the nature of colonial war, which is present everywhere and nowhere, means that the patient can no longer discern between French and Arab, friend and enemy, and everything is tinged with an ignoble, ignominious, disgusting ambiguity” (179).

Fanon likened such corrosive effects to “tinctures of decay . . . we must search out and mercilessly expel from our land and our spirits,” a complex, seemingly interminable task with a high risk of failure (1961: 249). As Camille Robcis noted recently in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, the

cases Fanon documented and treated made clear that "colonialism had a direct psychic effect. It could literally render someone mad by hijacking their person, their being, and their sense of self. The confiscation of freedom and the alienation brought about by colonialism and by racism were always simultaneously political and psychic" (Robcis: 304).

"I'm really very well, very well indeed," a young Algerian taxi-driver assures him brightly. Aged 26 and for some years married, though experiencing impotence for the first time, the man volunteers: "Give me a tonic or two, a few vitamins, and I'll build myself up a bit" (Fanon 1961: 256).

The case almost immediately reveals the deep scars and near-unstoppable cycle of violence plaguing the nation at the time. Since 1955, the man, B—, "had been a member of a branch of the FLN" and had "several times used his taxi for the transport of political pamphlets and also political personnel" (254). A surge in attacks and arrests in his town had forced him to abandon the taxi and take refuge at a friend's house"; "for several months," he was "without news of his wife and his little girl of a year and eight months" (254–55). When weapons are discovered in his taxi, possibly planted, French authorities go to his house, question his wife, then detain her for more than a week regarding his actions and whereabouts. In refusing to incriminate her husband, she remains silent, but thereby becomes a target herself; for her failure to "cooperate," she is brutally beaten, tortured, and raped.

"A few weeks later," B— says, as his wife initially was silent about this too, "I came to realize that they'd raped her *because they were looking for me*. In fact, it was to punish her for keeping silence that she'd been violated. . . . This woman had saved my life and had protected the organization. It was because of me that she had been dishonored. And yet she didn't say to me: 'Look at all I've had to bear for you.' On the contrary, she said: 'Forget about me; begin your life over again, for I have been dishonored'" (257–58; italics in the original).

Part-repeating (this time by self-directing) the earlier assault by the French authorities, the woman assumes the social and cultural stigma of rape as a psycho-political punishment. Through an act that resembles self-annulment and social death, her effort at dissolving the marriage is cast as a solution to the brutality and its ongoing effects, but it would also in effect cancel out her life. Overwhelmed by the strength of her conviction and devotion, the man recommits to her and they try to remake the marriage, apparently with mixed results. Overlaying all, the taxi-driver explains, is a raging, unanswered question about how, when, and even whether to "move on" from such events, as their recurring trauma is lodged in shared memory. There is also the intolerable problem of injustice for all the unpunished crimes, here and at scale: the woman's assault by and humiliation at the hands of French authorities, the couple's anger at the impossibility of achieving redress, and hints of guilt at his inability to protect her, juxtaposed with the fierce, potentially greater commitment she showed in protecting him: "But that thing—how can you forget a thing like that?" (258).

Subsequent cases in Fanon's chapter extend the psychic wreckage from colonial war into virtually all aspects of life under French rule. Their titles alone indicate the damage inflicted—the "ineffaceable wounds" that Fanon, as a psychiatrist and *médecin-chef*, was asked to treat:

- Case No. 2: *Accusatory delirium and suicidal conduct disguised as "terrorist activity" in a young Algerian twenty-two years old;*
- Case No. 3: *Neurotic attitude of a young Frenchwoman whose father, a high placed civil servant, was killed in an ambush;*

- Case No. 4: *Behavior disturbances in young Algerians under ten*;
- Case No. 5: *Puerperal psychoses among the refugees*.

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In many respects, “Colonial War and Mental Disorders” crystallizes the awful daily and clinical toll of the many maladies, syndromes, and traumas Fanon had identified nine years earlier in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952; trans. *Black Skin, White Masks*), a seminal work on racial alienation and self-estrangement under colonization to which it deserves detailed comparison, including for how Fanon’s work and thinking evolved. Reprinted in 1986 by Pluto Press, in a move described as sparking a “return to Fanon,” the book focused repeatedly on the psychic scars and symptoms that can manifest after an identity is vacated under duress—precisely the “hijacking” of identity to which Robcis alluded.

Among its many points of focus and inquiry, *Black Skin, White Masks* took issue with “The So-Called Dependency Complex of Colonized Peoples” (83–108), a concept popularized more than a decade earlier by several prominent European ethnologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists that implied to them psychic immaturity manifesting as an absence of courage and resolve. As may be clear from its popularity in the 1930s and 1940s, stemming from the influential work of psychotherapists and psychologists such as Alfred Adler, the concept of dependency was far from neutral or free of racial assumptions. Besides diagnosing entire continents of people as psychologically and culturally underdeveloped, one of its unintended consequences was to reposition colonialism as a putative solution to behavior not just required but for centuries daily enforced, while casting “superiority” as an implied remedy for the ensuing imbalance.

One such ethnologist—at the time director-general of the information service in French-controlled Madagascar—was Octave Mannoni, who sought to examine but also, for some of his critics (Fanon was his most-vocal), to sediment dependency and superiority “complexes” in his influential study *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (1950). Mannoni’s ethnography of colonization’s psychic effects includes “racialism” in various forms and gives almost equal attention to European hubris, domination, and prejudice (the so-called and long-understudied “Prospero complex”). He had also in close proximity published several reportorial essays, including from on-the-ground experience, about French colonial violence and the Malagasy anticolonial insurrection in the 1940s, citing (as would Fanon later from Algeria) brutality and overreaction by the French authorities, among whom Mannoni had worked since 1925 and of whom he was in fact highly critical (Roudinesco 1990: 234).

As is well-known from the much-more widely read *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon faulted Mannoni’s study for “los[ing] sight of the real” (politics and economics), “mak[ing] the inferiority complex something that antedates colonization,” and for seeming to imply that colonialism responds to a need for dependency (1952: 85, 98–99). All three contentions are however in this case open to challenge, including from Mannoni’s own journalistic record, where stark reportage of racially-inflected animus and violence predate the more-abstract psychological allusions to Shakespeare’s *Tempest* in *Prospero and Caliban*. According to historian of psychiatry Jock McCulloch, Fanon also accepted Mannoni’s account of the Prospero complex (hubris and violence stemming from aggressive overreach), and agreed “that there was a connection between colonial racism and sexual guilt.” Important for the context and our subject, McCulloch also notes that Fanon subsequently “gave a similar account of the psychology of colonial violence” (122).

As I've written elsewhere about Mannoni's writings from the later 1940s and how his own thinking and positions evolved, Fanon certainly adapted from Mannoni and Lacan (whose early seminars Mannoni attended, including as part of his own psychoanalysis with Lacan) the suggestion that violence can ensue when racial identifications *fail*—an argument lending importance not just to colonial overreach and its consequences for the colonized, but also, arguably as crucial, on colonial failure and how best to mitigate its highly unpredictable effects, both individually and *en masse*. This is one reason Fanon made clear in *Black Skin, White Masks* that he was “willing to work on the psychoanalytic level . . . the level of the ‘failures [ratés],’ in the sense in which one speaks of engine failures” (1952: 23).

Key differences between Fanon and Mannoni nonetheless emerge and are worth investigating, including for their subtly different political and psychic effects. “Whereas psychoanalysis speaks of *fantasy*” and much else psycho-political such as racial projection and transference, Macey notes in his excellent biography of Fanon, “Fanon consistently speaks of *trauma* and explains mental illness as a form of *social alienation*” (192; my emphases). With social alienation presented as a root cause, in short, Fanon's perspective in the early 1950s tends to cast psychic conflict as a *consequence* of colonialism, suggesting an easier transition to independence and self-determination than his later writing would suggest was likely or possible.

In contrast, Mannoni—by then a psychoanalyst—came close to inverting that model and its implied causality, viewing psychic and “extrasocial” concerns not just as paramount and themselves determinative, but as *one* possible explanation for colonial overreach and violence in the first place. The emphasis is neither ahistorical nor decontextualized; it stems from the internalization of localized and historically specific racial beliefs and assumptions. Arguably as important, Mannoni insisted that there was “no watertight barrier [*aucune barrière étanche*] between the psychology of the colonized and that of the European,” because both constituencies were “*only too similar*” in their apprehension of hostile thoughts and drives (“Complexe”: 1230).

As Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan has argued, Mannoni was chiefly concerned with the means by which “the Europeans and the colonized were psychologically conditioned for colonial relations long before colonization occurred” (Bulhan: 108; also Bolland). The same perspective led him to argue that social change *alone* would not end racial tension and that it was oversimplifying to suggest otherwise. National independence would not in itself solve colonialism's psychic legacy—the “tinctures of decay” and “ineffaceable wounds” that Fanon would recognize and diagnose. In Mannoni's earlier formulation, aspects of racism regrettably would outlast independence, not just because as beliefs and patterns of thought they are intangible and difficult to modify, but also because they sediment ideology, orient complexes, cross generations, and haunt minds. It would be better, in short, to avoid construing such racial imagoes as mostly *extensions* of political conflict, when they were—by Mannoni's reckoning—so often a driving cause of it.

To his critics, then as now—with *Prospero and Caliban* generally seen as encapsulating his intervention—Mannoni seemed to extrapolate a diverse social and political malaise into abstract interpersonal dysfunction—the colonizer and colonized locked eternally in mutually antagonistic *personae*. The reverse arguably was true. Just as Fanon would in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Mannoni stressed the corrosive effects of such tension and violence on daily psychic life. In his essays he argued that the associated stress and depersonalization involves race but also impersonal factors beyond it, with which “race” is in turn perceptually confused. His argument helps explain how tyranny could persist in nations that achieved political independence under authoritarian rule—one extending and reinforcing the inherited colonial structure.

Much is at stake also in Mannoni's focus on the beliefs and fantasies underpinning and outlasting colonialism. By complicating and finally rejecting a more voluntaristic, ego-based emphasis on colonial *bad faith*, a more-straightforward position popularized at the time by Jean-Paul Sartre and, later, Albert Memmi, Mannoni's writing has continued value for its focus on failure and difficulty. Actively involved in Lacan's early seminars in the 1950s, including making insightful interventions into the meaning of repetition and intersubjectivity, Mannoni helped to shape Lacan's de-anthropomorphic account of otherness—not to lose sight of actual people but to reassess their founding motivations in the context of their larger symbolic and political structures.

Given the implications of this critique for psychoanalysis, as for postcolonial theory, it seems vital to stress that in this respect Mannoni effectively bridged and recast two kinds of colonial critique that circulated widely in the 1950s and 1960s, greatly influencing the direction of anticolonial thought: the master–slave dialectic that Sartre, Fanon, and Memmi in different ways took and recast from Hegel (see esp. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952, “The Negro and Hegel”: 216–22, and Memmi: xxviii); and a Lacanian perspective that *rejected* sublation and reciprocity, instead emphasizing repetition, animus, difficulty, and the consequences of individual-to-systemwide failure.

One of the most valuable consequences of Mannoni's later work is, precisely, its willingness to push colonial psychology *beyond* selfhood and interpersonal exchange—“beyond the imaginary level,” as he put it—because the ego can grasp reality only by inverting and distorting it (qtd. in S2: 78). In 1950, Mannoni added that the collapse of colonial structures not only was inseparable from, but also might be caused by, the increasingly violent eruption of aggressive fantasies that Europeans were collectively trying to disown, including by projecting them onto the colonized. What concerned him in his 1950 essay “Psychologie de la revolte malgache,” for instance, was the specious disinterestedness that French colonials claimed to uphold as justification for their brutal suppression of anticolonial insurrection, on an island nation—Madagascar—that France had occupied since 1895.

In her richly sourced biography of Lacan, Elisabeth Roudinesco reminds that his eldest daughter from a second marriage (Laurence Bataille) raised money for—and subsequently was imprisoned in Paris for six weeks for supporting—the FLN and Algeria's freedom fighters. Anxious for her safety and release, Lacan nonetheless wrote to Winnicott in August 1960 of his “pride” at her political involvement (qtd. in Roudinesco 1997: 187). Among other examples cited, the episode helps underscore the practical *engagement* of psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts with colonialism and anticolonialism. Certainly, the “minute particulars” of historically specific symptoms and trauma that Mannoni and Lacan in different ways analysed were seen at the time as a consequence of continued fighting by the “Empire of the selfsame” (Cixous: 78)—the kind of imperialist politics, fueled by scientific racism, that drove European expansionism across the nineteenth century, and suppression of anticolonial revolt across much of the twentieth.

Because of his growing interest in what *escapes* the imaginary order in psycho-political terms, Mannoni's argument evolved over the course of these volatile years, emphasizing less an individual unconscious, formulated according to specific drives, than an impersonal structure contingent on language, history, and symbolization that overlapped most glaringly with state and military forces at the time. As he remarked in “The Decolonisation of Myself” (1966), “racial differences have *absolutely no meaning in the natural order*. [They] become the *significants* (to borrow a linguistic

term) which allow us at last to formulate, whether clearly or obscurely, the terms of the deepest problems concerning human relationships" (333).

"At last to formulate . . . the deepest problems concerning human relationships": The basis for this emphasis lies in his earlier work. In one response to Lacan's 1954–55 seminar on "The Ego in Freud's Theory," Mannoni proposed an adjustment to Lacan's perspective on intersubjectivity by pointing to a form of repetition that "may not be detectable in the thing that's repeated" (Lacan: "I like what you're saying"; qtd. in *S1*: 188–89). What recurs in colonial structures, we might say, has pressing political *and* nonsocial implications for all concerned—Mannoni's way of highlighting, before interpreting, the gap that arises between subjects and their symbolic structures. Especially at times of political strife, that space can assume major significance and be filled, individually and *en masse*, by prejudice and projection, violence and hatred. As he observed, "in interpersonal relations, something factitious is always brought in, namely the projection of others on to ourselves" (qtd. in *S1*: 147). This emphasis modifies the argument of *Prospero and Caliban* in crucial ways, for the "factitious" element demonstrates why colonial relationships in particular are so transferenceal, and thus volatile and aggressive in character.

In "Decolonisation," Mannoni used this perspective to signal what *impedes* and *interrupts* crossracial understanding. "It is," he remarked, "as though the meeting between black and white, far from being an encounter between two 'undifferentiated men'" (as Fanon famously implied in *Black Skin, White Masks*), "were a distillation of the difference between them—a difference devoid of any intrinsic meaning—which becomes the symbol, at once obvious and absurd, of *what goes wrong in human relations*, and also, so far as we ourselves are concerned, of what goes wrong in the white world" (1966: 333).

This astute, anti-essentialist claim about whiteness and "the white world" helps emphasize how fantasy both enables and corrupts race relations. As important, it underscores that nations and races are not locked in immutable, predetermined roles—that *contra* Sartre and Fanon, *white and black are not precisely as self is to Other*, a misperception circulating widely in previous academic work from the 1930s to 1950s, because impersonal factors always intervene and, in doing so, break the implied deadlock. No less fraught, as Fanon underscored, whiteness remains a projected construction and, as such, a brittle, fiercely defended rationale, prone to erupt precisely *because* of its false and unruly elements (1952: 215).

Since in Mannoni's formulation whites and blacks repeatedly draw on a "difference devoid of any intrinsic meaning" (1966: 333), his understanding of the Other as an impersonal, ultimately *nonracial* category displaced the Hegelian deadlock that Sartre had described and popularized in *Orphée noir* (1948), in a model lacking both dynamism and psycho-historical specificity. Mannoni's insights into anticolonialism and deferred action also pushed colonial critique beyond accounts of scapegoating and mimetic racism. As he remarked eloquently in the same 1966 essay, "*Nous sommes là dans le monde de l'histoire; nous y entrons à reculons*," a phrase losing much of its allusiveness when translated: "We are in the midst of an historical process; we are entering upon it blindfold [literally: *backwards, retrogressively*]" (1966: 161).

While Sartre's accounts of prejudice remained largely static and ego-bound, Mannoni in his essays and ethnography uncovered powerful connections among racial violence, unconscious images, and elements of psychic life that belie meaning and social transformation. Addressing different forms of socialization and impersonal relations, he possibly came closest among these thinkers to offering an anti-essentialist perspective on psychic and cultural aggression in its colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial forms.

One way to convey what Mannoni and Fanon in different ways upended would be to measure their arguments against the received wisdom of colonial psychiatrists at the time, many of whom wrote generically about continental Africa without treating any of the symptoms they blithely diagnosed from afar. Even as subsequent generations of psychiatrists acquired more experience in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa, they nonetheless continued promulgating appalling generalizations and untruths about a continent that dwarfs in size and population a nation such as England. Examples include H. L. Gordon, author of several essays on mental disorders and “sexual perversions” in Kenya; B. J. F. Laubscher, author of *Sex, Custom, and Psychotherapy: A Study of South African Pagan Natives* (1937); and Colin Carothers, author of numerous articles and two influential books: *The African Mind in Health and Disease: A Study in Ethnopsychiatry* (1953) and *The Psychology of Mau Mau* (1954).

Gordon conducted elaborate experiments on supposed “racial” intelligence and Africans’ and Europeans’ cranial size, as if late-Victorian critiques of phrenology had never occurred. According to a 1932 issue of the *British Medical Journal*, he “ha[d] found that a low degree of mentality is widely prevalent [in East Africans], constituting what in a European community would be a social danger” (Sequeira: 581).

Overall the most liberal of the psychiatrists named, Carothers extended these experiments by writing on “Mental Derangement in Africans” (1947) and “Frontal Lobe Function and the African” (1951). In *The African Mind*, he summed up his colleagues’ contentions as “European conceptions of the African [that] represent the truth”:

The African has been described as conventional; highly dependent on physical and emotional stimulation; lacking in spontaneity, foresight, tenacity, judgment and humility; inapt for sound abstraction and for logic; given to phantasy and fabrication; and, in general, as unstable, impulsive, unreliable, irresponsible, and living in the present without reflection or ambition, or regard for the rights of people outside his own circle.

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Instead of dismissing these offensive generalizations, Carothers went on to corroborate them as accurate and sound.

Though some of these arguments did recur in contemporaneous psychology, the latter generally came to different conclusions about the cause or etiology of distress and suffering, viewing them more as cultural than innate. While Gordon was working on East African cranial size, for instance, Wulf Sachs published his unorthodox analysis of John Chavafambira, a *nganga* (healer-diviner) from Manikaland, eastern Zimbabwe (then part of southern Rhodesia). *Black Hamlet* (1937), his account of the analysis-friendship, is a frequently self-reflexive statement about his own interest in Chavafambira’s well-being, including as a pathway to agency and political defiance.

“To credit a black African with an internal world was to go against the creeds, not just of explicit racism but also of medical science,” writes Jacqueline Rose in her excellent 1996 introduction to the reprinted work (Rose: 39). The “Hamletism” Sachs diagnosed and aspired to treat concerns Chavafambira’s seeming reluctance to politicize his spiritual emphasis and practice—a reluctance that comes in growing tension with Sachs’s emancipatory project. Extending far beyond routine countertransference, Sachs’s “need” for an end to Chavafambira’s self-doubt and apparent paralysis is unmistakable and itself subject to analysis (Rose). Just as crucial is Sachs’s self-described adjustment

from seeing his patient as a "psychoanthropological specimen" to appreciating his humanity and reluctance relative to wider responsibilities to the community (qtd. in Rose).

With greater self-reflexivity and growing debate on whether culture or biology was more determinative, differences for decades upheld as innate came to seem far less stable and foundational. Although J. F. Ritchie—"a convinced Freudian"—showed little theoretical interest in his or other Europeans' volatile projections, he began *The African as Suckling and as Adult* (1943) by stipulating that he could "find no essential differences between the African mind and the European" (4, 5; see also Gelfand: 533 and Vaughan, esp. 114). Ritchie's study is far from being a radical document, but it does assert a profound conceptual break with psychiatry's racial essentialism (sedimented via scientific racism in the nineteenth century), instead substituting—and frequently validating—warped cultural assessments of differences. Although it would be easy to dismiss this shift as bogus and in itself unimportant, given its residual biases, it nonetheless helped to demonstrate the mutability of prejudices and their conceptual analysis by underscoring that many of their roots were culturally inherited, not biologically endemic.

Ritchie's text nonetheless flounders on the epistemological gap between nature and culture that Freud began theorizing in the late 1890s and that Lacan would highlight in the 1940s before he set about erasing the last remaining vestiges of biologism in Freud's work. One reason for the impediment is Ritchie's (and others') *inability to control* assigned parameters for projection. In their model (as, later, in Mannoni's), transference *cannot* remain the sole province of the indigenous. Unavoidably, it serves as a reflexive account of the colonizer's demands—a portrait perhaps of what a colonialist *wants* in the form of power, wealth, and subordination.

The repercussions of this emphasis become clear when we consider the important liberties that Fanon and Mannoni took with it. Owing to a "long indulgence at the breast," Ritchie had claimed, referring to longer weaning than was popular in Europe at the time, the African regards himself as faultless and perceives the outer world as responsible for his misfortune, an obvious way of thwarting—indeed, invalidating in advance—sociopolitical dissent. "He introjects all good from without"—the thesis Carothers later endorsed—"and projects all bad from within" (qtd. in 1954: 87).

Whereas in this formulation the African is the source of all hostility, misfortune, and enmity, the European is magically purified of aggression while acting as a neutral, impartial interpreter of African self-directed violence: exactly the myth that Mannoni's 1940s essays on Madagascar were insistent on shattering. The extent of his political intervention becomes clearer when we see him upend Carothers's argument, metaphorically substituting *European* for *African* to create something more like: "The *European* tries to keep at a distance his sense of badness or inferiority—and he does succeed in keeping it out of consciousness most of the time."

In *Prospero and Caliban* and in related essays where Mannoni represents this argument, he attributes the perception of "inferiority" to colonizers alone and deems this a driving *cause*, not just an effect, of colonial overreach and violence. Ten years later, in "The Decolonization of Myself," he anticipated Ng g wa Thiong'o in "envisag[ing] . . . a study of the psychology of *decolonization*"—"a difficult undertaking, but one of great intrinsic interest" (1966: 327)—an undertaking Lacanian psychoanalysis had arguably made possible by its stress on individuals' complex relationship to their and others' self-strangeness (Vergès: 85–99).

While continuing to advance theories of racism "beyond the imaginary level," Mannoni used the principle of "dislocation" to highlight forms of identification and fantasy that escaped Sartre's

“Manichean allegory” of self and Other, locked in a seemingly dyadic and eternal crisis (qtd. in S2: 78). The accent on *impersonal otherness*, I have argued, was crucial to understanding racial strife and enmity: it not only rid colonial critique of any remaining vestiges of biological essentialism but stressed the need to rethink reciprocity and relationality, relative to the practical difficulty of attaining complete freedom *from* colonialism.

In conclusion, in the later work of Mannoni and Fanon, what psychoanalysis gave colonial critique was the possibility of a decolonized psychiatry based not on mandate or procedure, but rather the individualized symptoms that manifest from the collapse of European hubris and its associated beliefs. With both analysts keenly aware of how “much of the old predicament survives in the new” (Mannoni 1966: 327), their focus on the psychic scars of centuries of colonialism brought urgent and renewed attention to the structural organization of beliefs, assumptions, and prejudices imbibed across generations. In the work of both analysts, a similar idea takes hold: failure is at each level of colonialism the precondition for a properly decolonized relation to oneself and everyone else—it is, in short, the basis for a truly *postcolonial* relation to the world.

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