

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND RACISM - READING THE OTHER SCENE

Introduction

One of the most important features of The Macpherson Report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, and one not much remarked upon, was the insistence upon the distinction between unconscious racism, operating covertly or unwittingly, behind the scenes, or perhaps behind the backs of well intentioned governance, and the malevolent, consciously directed forms of racial hatred so clearly manifested by Stephen's killers¹. In all the controversy surrounding the failure to bring Stephen's killers to justice, and the mixture of inaction, incompetence, silence and cover up that for once brought the police and the white working class community of South London into the same side of the dock, there was one piece of evidence which both broke that complicity and put into question the distinctions upon which the report's recommendations were made.

As part of their attempt to find irrefutable evidence of the five young white men, who are widely regarded as having committed the murder, the police set up a concealed camera to film the suspects at home. In the footage that was released we saw the group prancing about the living room, brandishing knives and chanting racist obscenities. It was a pantomime of racial violence, and many observers were struck by the histrionic quality of the whole episode. These were young men getting a thrill by indulging in racial phantasies which bonded them together as a gang. They were acting 'as if' they were performing, for each other's benefit, a script written to be staged for quite another audience, only to discover retrospectively, of course, that this mimicry was in reality being observed. Having apparently got away with their public misdeed, because no witnesses would come forward, they had 'unwittingly', as a result of a 'private indulgence' made themselves into the object of the whole world's fascinated, and officially horrified, gaze. The video was not admitted as legal evidence in the case but it left us with a series of unresolved questions: just what can be reliably inferred from such material about racist states of mind? What does it tell us about the role of phantasy in the committal of racial violence, and about the complicity of certain kinds of prurient and moralistic stances in the construction of the anti/racist spectacle?

As soon as the question is posed in this way, we have to begin to consider how the *mis en scene* of racial violence and hatred, works simultaneously at the level of private phantasy and public mythography, in terms of what is consciously avowed and unconsciously disavowed, to create a series of impasses at the level of engagement with the real. In other words we have entered, whether we like it or know it, or not, into the domain of psychoanalysis.

As we will see, there are many different schools of thought within psychoanalysis, each with its own preferred strategy for defining and reading the symptomatic signs of racism, each claiming to be the royal road to a proper interpretation of the phenomenon. Nevertheless there are some common denominators, and these may provide us with a starting point.

The first is the concept of The Unconscious itself. For psychoanalysis, this does not simply denote a lack of consciousness or reflexive awareness, a kind of ‘absent mindednesses’, nor is it that which is not consciously intended’; rather the Unconscious is defined positively as constituting an autonomous domain of psychic reality and its representation. Unconscious phantasy may not directly accessible, but through the coded forms of dreams, bodily symptoms and slips of the tongue, through certain characteristic frames of mind and forms of symbolization, it does speak. What it speaks about are elemental feelings of rage, persecution, anger, and jealousy consequent on primordial fears of separation, abandonment, loss or death; and the no less strong impulses to possess and bond with people or things that are felt to offer safety and protection against these destructive drives. It is with these Other scenes – scenes initially dominated by extreme ambivalence towards the (m)other and with the defenses that are mobilised by the child in order to deal with it - that psychoanalysis is primarily concerned, both as a general theory of human development and as a specific practice of therapeutic intervention.

From a psychoanalytic standpoint, ‘unconscious racism’ is therefore, first and foremost a description of what happens to certain elementary structures of feeling and phantasy when they become racialised. Or to put in another way, we are looking at how processes of racialization (which may be variously political, cultural and/or economic, institutional or informal, depending on context and conjuncture) engage with and affect the ‘other scenes’ of self identification. The staging of these transformations, in both public and private settings is the story of how the Unconscious (que ‘discourse of the Other’) animates racist practices (que strategy for excluding or eliminating the Other from the body politic).

The payoff for adding a properly psycho-analytic dimension to the account is that instead of simply demonstrating the illogicality of racist beliefs - a relatively easy task whose accomplishment may make us feel useful as intellectuals but does little to tackle the underlying problem - we look at how these beliefs are underpinned by certain indicative structures of feeling or emotional investment that have their own rationale in the psychic economy of desire and its disavowal. It may then become possible to pinpoint hitherto unrecognised sources of undercover resistance to anti racist policies and to devise more effective ways of engaging with them. In this way, psychoanalytically informed, antiracist work may be

able to tackle some of the more intractable forms of popular and institutional racism in a way that Left antiracism, with its overwhelming attachment to rationalist, and prescriptive modes of address, has so far failed to do.

In principle then, psychoanalysis should have a lot to contribute. In practice it has been a different story. Key psychoanalytic assumptions about the nature of mental and emotional life and its interaction with social, cultural and political orders have been used to generate arguments about the causes, effects and meaning of racism which are often absurdly reductive, demonstrably false, and even highly racist in their implication. In so far as these difficulties have not been addressed or overcome, they continue to be seized on by those who have their own reasons to discredit the psychoanalytic enterprise.

In the next section I shall summarise the main criticisms that have been leveled at psychoanalytic readings of racism. The chapter then goes on to look at the work of Adorno and Fanon in some detail as exemplars of the attempt to overcome some of these difficulties. The final section reviews recent developments and debates in which post structuralist theories of discourse and desire, largely informed by the work of Jacques Lacan, have attempted to engage with contemporary forms of racism. The chapter concludes by returning to the Stephen Lawrence case to argue that the psychoanalytic frame, applied within the limits and conditions that are proper to it, adds a valuable dimension to understanding and engaging with the deeper reaches of the popular racist imagination.

The Hermeneutics of suspicion

It has recently been suggested that in many respects Racism is the Unconscious of psychoanalysis, the constitutive but disavowed foundation of its project, yet its fatal blind spot. Certainly the special relationship between racism and psychoanalysis must be understood in both historical and structural terms.

Freud's work was born out of two of the critical experiences of 20th Century: migration and racism. Fin de siècle Vienna, as Carl Schorske showed so brilliantly in his book, was nothing if not a multicultural city, inhabited by large numbers of refugees from Russia, Poland, and Eastern Europe. The founding members of Freud's circle were predominantly from Jewish backgrounds, and, as such, were multilingual in a triple sense. They spoke and read German (amongst other European languages), as well as Hebrew; many used Yiddish to converse amongst themselves on every day, non scientific topics; even more importantly they were teaching each other a quite new foreign language, one which had never been spoken in this way before, the language of the Unconscious.

If they imagined that by mastering this discourse of the Other, they would somehow be accepted into the non Jewish establishment which ruled the Medical and other scientific faculties of the European university, they had another thing coming. Psychoanalysis was from the outset attacked, as 'the Jewish science', its concern with questions of infant sexuality, memory, desire and identity were regarded as symptomatic expressions of the unhealthy and febrile temperament of the Jewish race, or an expression of the neurotic self hate engendered by their hopeless attempt to assimilate into modern European culture and society.

There is a large literature now on the ambivalent relationship between early psychoanalysis, Judaism and Jewish culture, and how this was played out both in Freud's own work, and in the politics of racial affinity and enmity within the Viennese circle. We know about the virulent anti-Semitism of Groddeck 'the wild analyst' who fulminated against the evils of miscegenation and the threat to the Aryan master race; we have learnt to detect the more subtle prejudices of Ernest Jones, Freud's official biographer, who developed a hygienicist model of the body politic to argue that total assimilation was the only solution to the Jewish question. Freud, worried about the effect of anti-Semitism on the fledgling discipline, hoped that Carl Jung's presence would give psychoanalysis a more acceptable Christian face. Jung's own theory of 'racial memory' and his deployment of his model of individuation to characterise the African psyche as primitive did not however save psychoanalysis for long from its 'Jewish' tag.

How far did early psychoanalysis give a gloss to common sense Victorian thinking about race, biology and human evolution? Many commentators have noted the tension between, on the one hand, the tactical

appropriation of bio-energetic models and discourses drawn from positivistic science (including at this time racial science and anthropology), in order to situate psychoanalysis within the Western Enlightenment tradition and on the other, the persistence of themes and idioms deriving from Jewish mysticism and German romanticism, and which gave psychoanalysis its currency in bohemian, intellectual and artistic circlesⁱⁱ. The tension can be found, of course in Freud's own work; it is there for example in dissonance between his libido theory and his method of dream interpretation; and in the non sequiturs of his early theory of recapitulation (ontogeny repeating phylogeny as stone age baby transits to civilised man) considered in the light of his later reflections on the culture of modernity and the return of its repressed to be found in *Civilisation and its Discontents*.

Issues of race and ethnicity were thus current, if largely disavowed, within the psychoanalytic circle itself. Long before Kristallnacht and the book burnings, long before the trains began carrying Jews back from their asylum in the West to torture and death in East, race was the largely unacknowledged touchstone of the early psychoanalytic debates. Yet with the fall of Vienna to the Nazi's and the dispersal of the founding psychoanalysts to other countries, mainly of course to Britain and the USA, (but also in some cases further afield to Latin America and South Africa) race paradoxically disappeared from the agenda. In so far as psychoanalytic concepts were applied to the analysis of racism, it was largely by others, by sociologists, anthropologists, or historians, themselves often Jews and exiles from Nazism, (viz. the Frankfurt School/New School of Social Research) that were sympathetic to Freud's ideas.

From the 1940's onwards, the professional culture of psychoanalysis took on an increasingly dual character. The diasporic communities of analysts made a concerted attempt to assimilate to the scientific conventions of the host society, to give their discipline a distinctively local, or rather national inflection, reflecting the most cherished ideals and values of the English or American way of life. The other, more negative sides to the English or American dream (including of course racism and colonialism) were therefore ignored. These 'other scenes' became part of the repressed in the collective memory of psychoanalysis. At the same time great efforts were made to preserve the integrity of clinical theory and practice through the operation of training institutes. Their goal was to create an enduring base from which to assert the distinctiveness of the psychoanalytic tradition, even and especially by those who were most concerned to revise it. Inevitably this meant that any 'foreign influences' that might compromise or contaminate the corpus – and the body politic – of Freudianism, were regarded with deep suspicion.

It is against this background that we have to understand the ambition of psycho-analysis as a critical hermeneutics – and its failure of nerve. For we have here the paradox of a discipline that prides itself on

unflinchingly confronting the ambition, greed, power hunger, perversity and murderous rage of the individual patient yet unquestioningly accepts a sanitised version of its own history from which all these nasty elements (including racism) have been magically purged.

Two moves make this possible. Firstly by instituting intensive forms of professional self scrutiny directed at the mastery and evaluation of its own internal clinical practice, psychoanalysis seeks to place itself 'above suspicion' of cultural bias, and to lay claim to objectivity as a natural science of the Unconscious. Yet this scrutiny has proved to be highly selective; it has not, for example, extended to the fact that very few analysts or patients are recruited from Black, Asian or other non white ethnic minorities, nor does it consider the structured neglect of questions of race and ethnicity in the conduct of training and the talking cure. Instead suspicion is directed outwards; the motivations of all those who raise the issue of 'institutional racism', whether from their position on the couch, or the academic podium are interpreted 'psychodynamically' in such a way as to invalidate the arguments being made.

There are many examples in the clinical literature of this kind of abusive use of clinical insight. Thus for example, in the USA there was a notorious case in which a female patient's involvement in Black power groups was interpreted as a flight from rage with the analyst; another patient who suffered from an 'irrepressible urge to take part in race riots' and had failed to make progress at work (due to race discrimination) was made to see 'through the analytic work' that her protestations were warded off self loathing, and, as such, a defence against recognising her internal rage. Both these patients, be it noted, had Black therapists. Similarly a white patient who showed a strong sense of identification with Black causes, became actively involved in anti racist struggles, and eventually got assaulted by a racist policeman in a demonstration was told by his analyst that he was acting out a regressive masochistic phantasy of being beaten by his father.

Of course there are bad analysts, and bad interpretations; the normalisation of bias under the guise of 'objective' clinical judgement is what has given psychoanalysis – like psychiatry - such a bad name. Ironically what makes such reactionary positions tenable is the very radicalness of psychoanalytic skepticism vis a vis ideology. In *Civilisation and its Discontents*, Freud suggested that the way to psychic hell may well be paved with good intentions. In what may today be read as a pioneering study of the culture of complaint, he suggested that behind charitable deeds and fine - or politically correct – words, we may frequently discern far less creditable motivations at work. Political activism always has its 'other scene'. He does not however say that this is always or automatically the case, or even where it is, that the effect is to invalidate the 'do gooding'. Black militants who make knee jerk denunciations of racism when

something goes wrong in their own private lives, may be using political rhetoric as a means to evade their existential responsibility, or they may be giving an entirely accurate and dispassionate account of some process of discrimination they have personally suffered, and conceivably they may be doing both. There is no law of automatic inversion whereby what is consciously affirmed is inevitably unconsciously denied. It is always a matter of investigation, not a priori judgement and the answer - the unconscious meaning of the situation - will vary from case to case.

In principle then, psychoanalysis gives no support to abusive generalisations along the lines 'all whites are unconsciously racist', or 'all Black militants secretly envy, and hence want to destroy, the achievements of European civilisation'. In practice however, whole metapsychologies of racism have been constructed on the basis of selective clinical evidence and inflated over-interpretation. Richard Sterba in a famous study based on his white patients who had taken part in the 1943 anti Black riots in Detroit, argued that Negrophobic violence was derived from repressed sibling rivalry. Kovel drawing on a mixture of clinical and documentary material for his 'psycho-history' of white racism in the American Deep South, suggested that the motivation was more directly oedipal; but in both case, sweeping generalisations were being made, by extrapolating evidence about individual psychopathology to collective and institutional processes.

The unresolved question which recent critics of psychoanalysis have raised, is how come a discipline that prides itself on such rigorous self scrutiny, whose meta-psychology boasts of its radical skepticism, and whose therapeutic endeavors are directed towards releasing the patient from the toils of compulsive repetition and the 'false self', how come that with all this going on, such strategies of mis-recognition persist, especially in the areas of race and ethnicity? Is there perhaps something intrinsic to the psychoanalytic method as such, something built into the structure of its hermeneutics that not only makes such interpretations possible, but actively generates and endorses them?

The Analytic Epoch - A *reductio ad absurdum*?

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan is famous, amongst other things, for his aphorism that the efficacy of analysis as a talking cure, lies in the fact that within its special setting and frame 'nothing real happens'. He was referring to the fact that everything that is brought into play in the analysis from outside - events in everyday life, social or political situations in which the patient is caught up - all this is interpreted in relation to the patients' feelings towards the analyst which in turn, are held to be a repetition of earlier patterns of relatedness towards parents, dominated by infantile phantasies and defence mechanisms. In other words, the analyst suspends judgement as to the wider significance or facility of the external event in order to concentrate on its unconscious meaning for the patient through the chain of associations and memories it evokes.

This procedure has been called the analytic epoch; the interpretive frame wrapped around the patients' utterances, systematically brackets out everything to do with the 'real referent' and instead considers them as communications between different, split off parts of the inner self or (m)other, as mediated by the analyst's presence and hence over determined by the dynamics of transference.

From this vantage point, external social reality only enters into consideration in so far as it functions as a form of camouflage for processes of internal sabotage or psychic disavowal (denial by means of the real), or alternatively serves to focus strategies of evasion or acting out that take no account of self preservation (denial of the real). These can be two sides of the same coin. For example a white boy is set upon and attacked by a group of Asian boys on his way home from school. The boy's mother uses the incident as a rationale for her agoraphobia, and her racism - just look what happens when you go out, you get set upon by Blacks - and attempts to implicate her son in both (denial by means of the real); meanwhile the son, in order to protect himself against becoming drawn into a *folie a deux*, denies that such a thing has ever happened, and ignores warnings that the gang are still out to get him (denial of the real).

The analytic epoch is an essential device of clinical treatment, but it can also lead to abusive interpretations. A frequent example, as we have seen, is the way transference resistance on the part of Black patients towards white analysts (which frequently focuses on differences of colour or culture), is regarded by the analyst as arising from purely internal instinctual sources, rather than as a carryover, maybe inappropriate, from valid external social experience. Clearly such an approach may do great damage and jeopardise the therapeutic outcome; but the epoch has even more dire consequences when it is extrapolated from the consulting room and applied as an epistemological principle for explaining racism in the society outside; yet this is just what Freudian metapsychology attempts to do.

Different tendencies within psychoanalysis operate with different models of the interaction between psychic and social structure, but they all tend to assume as given the following set of distinctions:

A	B
Phantasy	Rationality
Internal	External
Biological	Cultural
Individual	Group
Latent	Manifest

Whichever instance is taken as axiomatic (and this varies), the items in column B are invariably treated as secondary, symptomatic or even epiphenomenal, while the items in column A are regarded as primary in terms of causation and/or meaning. The aim of the analytic work is to uncover the workings of Set A in and through Set B, and then to map B back onto A in order to recover from the social items their true (i.e. psychological) significance or explanation. This procedure is therefore intrinsically reductive, and the reduction takes two main forms: Set B is explained as the effect and Set A as the Cause (Libido theory and Ego Psychology); Set B is interpreted as a site of symbolic displacement and Set A as a locus of symbolic condensation (Kleinian Object Relations theory and Lacanian Discourse Theory).

Although the two approaches yield radically different accounts of mental life, they both operate a general reduction of the structural properties of social institutions and groups, to the psychological characteristics of the individual human subjects who inhabit them. From the point of view of constructing a theory of racism, one of the key effects of psychoanalytic reductionism is that positions of powerlessness, inequality, or exclusion are de-valorised as instances of the real; instead they are treated as the site of unconscious projections or compensations drawing on phantasies of omnipotence, castration, or abandonment. We have already seen how this might work as a racially invalidating device in the clinical setting, but as the basis of a meta-psychology of racism, it produces even more dire results. For example in some accounts racism is reduced to a form of xenophobia which in turn is linked to infantile stranger anxiety. A more general tendency is to subsume racism under the general rubric of prejudice and scapegoating – i.e. the splitting off and projection of bad, internally persecutory aspects of the self into Others. Racist attitudes and behaviour are then explained as the expression or acting out of internal psychological dynamics located within the individual, dynamics which in turn are mapped into sphere of inter-group relations where the world is split into a Good Us and Bad Them.

In such theories, the real objects of racial hatred Blacks or/and Jews are present only as the containers, screens, or vectors of more or less paranoid projections. This might in itself be useful in indicating the phantasmagoric nature of racist constructions; but this de-realisation is capped by another, far more dangerous process of de-racialisation. For the real object of racial phantasy is not, in this view, the Jew or the Black at all. These are merely displacements - substitute figures standing in for the subjects' own father and mother, the phallus (castration anxiety) or the womb (and separation anxiety).

The key authorisation for this move is to be found in Freud's 1922 paper 'Some *neurotic mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality*'. In this essay, centered on a clinical study of the Daniel Schreber case, Freud argued that in paranoid states of mind socially taboo impulses are transferred from the subject to

the object where they can become the focus of aggression. In the case of men, the forbidden subject is the boy's submissive homosexual desire for the father, which covers over the underlying parricidal impulse; in the case of the paranoiac, this repressed hatred is displaced into a generalised hatred and the urge to destruction which is randomly expressed against socially undesirable objects.

This paper has been the single most important influence on subsequent psychoanalytic interpretations of racism. In Sterba's analysis, Blacks are interpreted as playing against or the displacement of the patient's oedipal anxieties. Sterba argued that the repressed fear/hatred of the father associated with the boy's passive homosexual desire for him, is projected onto Blacks. Why? Because in the culture of the Deep South at this time Blacks were legitimate scapegoat; therefore they could be the substitute object of both homosexual desire and its aggressive disavowal, thus allowing a benign paternal imago of the (white) father to be sustained.

For Kovel too, race fantasies are applied only at second hand to 'races'; the full range of meanings in race fantasies cannot be understood, he said, unless their infantile root is taken into account; racism is a kind of acting out, a system which facilitates the expression of infantile desire without conscious knowledge. For him racism was a special kind of negative Oedipus; the Black man represented both the father and the son in their destructive aspects - the father with the omnipotent phallus - the son who lusts after the mother's body. In attacking and dominating Blacks the white man is both a father castrating the son and the son castrating the (Black) father; that is why the more Black men are humiliated, the more they are invested with prodigious sexual capacities and are the object of sexual envy i.e. they are envied for possessing the libidinal power (the phallus) that has been renounced or lost by the whites.

Recently this idea has been taken up by historian David Roediger in his account of the transformation of European immigrants (including Jews and Irish to the USA) into the standard bearers of a 'new white race'. Roediger argued that Native Americans and African Americans came to unconsciously represent the sexual and social freedoms of the pre-industrial world which the white populations of the American frontier towns were being forced to surrender in making the transition into the work disciplines of capitalism and modern times. The racial ambivalence of the Irish in particular stemmed from the fact they belonged in both worlds; their love/hate relation to Blacks was part of a historical 'return of the repressed'.

Kovel explored the other, positive, side of the oedipal triangle in discussing the role which 'Black mummies' played in the upbringing of many white children from well to do families in the plantation

society of the Deep South. The contrast between the strong 'libidinal' bond established with wet nurse or nanny, and the emotional distance created by the mother, set the template for the sexual/racial double standard: Black women being regarded as warm, and sexually available (objects of lust and disregard), and white women as unapproachable 'southern belles' (objects of idealisation and longing).

Almost all the analyses that proceed in this vein focus on the racialisation of quasi oedipal relations between white men and Black women. In other words they follow Freud in privileging the masculine standpoint. One refreshing exception to this is the work of Joan Riviere. Trained by Melanie Klein, Riviere was concerned to explore feminine positioning as a relatively autonomous dynamic within the oedipal triangle. In her famous theory of masquerade she elaborated a model of the feminine psychic defenses that were mobilised against the destructive, castratory effects of patriarchal authority. To illustrate her ideas she discussed the case of a patient who had phantasies of being attacked by a Negro whom she would first seduce and then hand over to the police. Riviere noted that this phantasy had been very common in her patient's childhood and youth which she had spent in the southern states of America; in phantasy then, her patient asserted the power of female desire in the face of male violence, by exploiting her position of racial superiority to attack Black potency. Riviere argued that the symbolic father that figured in this scenario was not represented by the attacking Negro who (in other scenes) took place as an object of desire, but by the law asserted in the father's name by the white male authorities, who punish the Black for daring to cross the race line. In this way this white woman is 'free' to substitute the Black male body (= the black phallus) for the (white) father's penis that she already has inside her. Riviere called this a series of displacements through which the place or function of the sexual and racial Other is assumed only to be disavowed a process of masquerade, and she linked it to the arts of seduction which women learn as the only way of asserting their own desire within the field of male sexual dominance.

It is not that such analyses do not shed some interesting light on structures of feeling and phantasy that may be evoked by popular iconographies of race, or that the dispositions they describe may not feature in the biographies of some individual racists. The problem arises in the conflation of different levels of analysis and/or their reduction to a single all determining principle of psychological causation. For, to take Kovel's example, the double standard cannot simply be read off from child rearing patterns, even in their most normative aspect. Why? Because the actual affective relations with mother or nurse, however mediated by race, will vary drastically depending on the inner world of the child, the workings of a given family phantasy system, and what Freud called 'the vicissitudes of the instincts'. Riviere's suggestion that her white female patient's phantasies of seduction/betrayal/vengeance over a Black man are part of a common culture of racism in the Deep South leaves unresolved the question as to whether this is a normative instance of the

racialisation of female desire, or of the feminisation of racist desire; are we dealing with the translation into primary process thinking of narrative themes integral to the popular culture of this time and place; or is it a case of secondary elaboration of a perverse sado masochistic phantasy, couched in the idioms of racist myth and folk tale?

In principle it would be possible to tackle such questions by applying the model of over determination that governs psychoanalytic interpretation. It is a clinical common place convention that the same dream s (viz. a train running into a wall) can have many different meanings, the exact one only being established through a process of free association that explores the network of signifiers in which it is embedded. The same principle applies to understanding racism's 'other scenes'. Take the example of a white schoolboy who writes 'pakis go home' all over the playground wall in a school with a strong anti-racist policy. This may involve acting out a whole range of non racial phantasies (viz. to do with the desire to be caught and punished by expulsion, or hatred of the school, or the desire to be sent home); such feelings may have become racialised by a process of cultural habituation or repetition setting up a fixed association between the symbolic position which Asian children or teachers occupy in this boys' inner world and their situation in external social reality. Perhaps this may be linked in some cases to envy for the warm protective family environment and success at school which Asians are thought to enjoy and/or to anxiety about the loss of such patterns of kinship and community amongst whites. In so far as those connections are made, writing the slogan might allow this boy to both unconsciously identify with Asians, by getting himself excluded and sent home, so putting himself symbolically and materially in their place in a way that allows him to consciously 'get his own back' whilst disavowing his racial envy and anxiety.

Such conjectures will readily come to the mind of anyone who is at all familiar with how to apply the procedures of psychoanalytic thinking to the study of popular racism. However, the point is they are just hunches, not explanations, and treating one as if it were the other is precisely the kind of a priorism that we have to guard against. In fact we could only arrive at a fully fledged interpretation if these initial conjectures were tested through a lengthy process of working through the boy's fears and phantasies about school, and home, as well as what he thinks about Blacks. The same graffiti, written by another boy might turn out to have quite a different unconscious resonance.

Over determination works the other way as well, of course, so that many different signifying acts can get connected to the same object. So, for example, if we shift focus to consider the public meaning of racist graffiti, it becomes clear that the performative power of the message 'pakis go home' (i.e. to actuate the reality to which it refers and so 'persuading' Asians to move from the area) depends for this 'graphic' effect

on its material functioning within a whole network of other signifying practices mobilised in strategies of racial harassment (viz. spitting, obscene gestures, insults, verbal threats, threatening letters and phone calls, vandalism, faeces put through letter boxes). In other words, a whole lot of disparate practices, each with their own 'logic of signification' may nevertheless by habitual association come to have a shared symbolic meaning bound up with their application to a common object, and this indeed is the work of 'racialisation'.

The notion of over-determination thus allows us to address the complex, multifaceted nature of racism. It indicates that there is no automatic principle of one to one correspondence between culture and personality, biography and social structure, culture and identity, such that the institutional forms of racism automatically mirror and/or underwrite the psychic structure of the individual racist. Even in the most racialised, homogenised, and totalitarian kind of dominant society, where mechanical solidarities are considered to be acceptable, (one thinks of Nazi Germany or certain settler colonialisms, or South Africa under apartheid), such a tight fit is not possible.

There have been some attempts to complicate the picture by building intervening variables into the analysis, but these do not apply the notion of over determination to the task. Kovel, for instance distinguished between dominative racism, (based on oedipal desire and the equation black = phallus = paternal signifier), and aversive racism which is anally sadistic in orientation, and centered on phantasies about dirt and bodily functions repudiated in the search for some purified notion of a 'higher' culture or civilisation. Young Bruehl similarly distinguished between different types of racism in terms of their characteristic psychopathologies. Anti-Semitism is an obsessional prejudice displayed by people with over rigid super egos whilst negrophobia exemplifies hysterical prejudice in which a group is chosen to act out forbidden sexually aggressive drives that the racist has repressed. This is contrasted with ethnocentrism and xenophobia which is based on a narcissistic refusal to value difference for its own sake.

All these examples show, however, that in making these correlations Freudianism has not so much overcome its reductionism as diversified its effects. So how does it come about that a theory which so radically 'deconstructs' the myth of the unitary subject in the clinical setting, should operate with such an integrationist model of self and society when it comes to generalise its findings? To understand this turnabout we have to look at the intellectual division of labour between the various branches of the human sciences, and in particular the special relationship that psychoanalysis has come to entertain with sociology.

How (Not) to construct a Psychoanalytic Theory of racism without really trying

If you want to go about constructing a psychoanalytic theory of racism the lazy way, you take a number of short steps. Firstly you concentrate on what are widely assumed to be the clinical strengths - the analysis of transference and resistance, the operation of the major defence mechanisms (projection, introjection, splitting, denial, and foreclosure), the theory of narcissism, and borderline personality, the psychodynamics of envy, guilt, and anxiety. These are the bedrock of clinical judgement and treatment concerning individual psychopathology.

Secondly you look at the more explicit or ideal typical forms of racist behaviour and belief and you try and find evidence for the operation of the structures which you have already identified in clinical practices as examples of individual psychopathology. Lo and behold you do indeed find that individuals with pronounced or extreme racist views, or who carry out violent racial attacks, exhibit a common pattern of psychopathology. Some of them suffer from contagion phobias, others get anxiety attacks if they are in a lift with a Black person; quite a few white men exhibit deeply ambivalent or envious feelings about what they see as the superior sexual potency or license enjoyed by Black men; others entertain sexual phantasies of a sadistic kind towards Black women; a lot of them of them project the bad part of themselves into their preferred racial hate object, and they indulge in a magical or primary process thinking in scapegoating ethnic minorities and blaming them for all manner of social ills.

So far so good. It seems that we have located certain invariant (or at least frequently recurrent), psychological traits, which can be found strongly associated (if not statistically correlated) with certain invariant (or at least frequently recurrent) features of racist thought and practice. So, it can be safely concluded there must be a causal relation between the two. Starting from this fatal equation psychoanalysis goes one step further and claims that it can explain the causal link in terms of its own theory of individual or group psychodynamics. This gives us some of most richly absurd theories of racism in the whole canon. For example the equation of Black people with faeces, or Jews with 'dirty money' is explained in terms of anal sadistic phantasies on the part of people who have been too rigidly potty trained. The rape and castration phantasies about Black men which are found amongst members of the Klu Klux Klan or the participants in urban race riots in the USA are explained as a displacement of their sibling rivalry or oedipal ambivalence towards their own fathers who are perceived to be cruel, powerful and engaging in extramarital sex with Black women. Alternatively the 'white American male projects his repressed sexuality on the Negro, constructing him in phantasy as the object of homosexual desire.'

But then a sociologist joins the party and points out that many of the young people who were members of the Hitler Jugend were not authoritarian personality types but fun loving and sexually liberated wandervogel; someone else brings up evidence to show that rape and castration phantasies about Black men are not confined to the Klu Klux Klan, but are quite widely distributed, being entertained by large numbers of people, including other Black men, who in no way can be described as white supremacists; so already things are beginning to look a little bit more complicated. Finally our sociologist tactfully suggested that these so called common psychopathological traits of the racist, can be found occurring in non racists, and even anti racists, and are not specific to racism itself. They are present in political witch hunts and purges conducted by totalitarian regimes, in religious sectarianisms and ethnic nationalisms of every kind, in the fanatical loyalties generated by football teams, or socialist groupuscules; in almost any social ideology you care to name similar mechanisms of projection/splitting/denial can be seen at work. At this level the psychodynamics of a lynch mob and a chauvinistic gang of football supporters have more in common with each other, than they do with other forms of racism or nationalism, but that hardly helps us to understand the differences between the culture of the American deep South and Southern suburban England.

So, our social scientist concludes, what does it really help to explain about racisms, or even racists to point out their formal similarities with all these other instances? At best it reduces racism to a subset of a generic prejudice, a particularly acute form of xenophobia or ethnocentrism. At worst it regards racism as the symptomatic expression of a particular, pathological personality type, rigid anally fixated, authoritarian, narcissistic, sexually repressed, and paranoid. Worse still by insisting that racism is an irrational residue of primitive thinking, and racists are infantile, perverse people who for one reason or another have failed to grow up into mature, fulfilled and democratic individuals, psychoanalysis reintroduces by the back door its own version of the great moral dividing line between civilised and primitive, between the educated who speak with the voice of reason, and the rest who do not. That distinction, we need hardly reminding, has been a characteristic device of European racism since the 18th century Enlightenment first introduced it.

At this point, psychoanalysis may become rather defensive in its claims to explain racism. What is then modestly proposed is a rather crude division of intellectual labour. Psychoanalysis will explain the psychological mechanisms at work in creating the 'subjective conditions of affiliation to particular kinds of social ideology', and historians, anthropologists or sociologists will explain why in one context the social ideology has a fascist or a socialist content, or here takes a religious and there a political form or why in this time and place Jews or Asians are the object of fear or attack.

So for example the Kleinians will say, look we have a perfectly serviceable theory of envy, as a phantasy system; but it is socially opportunistic - the phantasy will attach itself to whatever object or group is socially sanctioned in a particular culture or group as being enviable. So you historians or sociologists go away and work out whether this or that group is more or less likely to be envied because of their race, for reasons x, y, and z, and we will explain to you what kind of people are most likely to be drawn into the psychodynamics of racial envy.

It seems like a perfectly reasonable deal, until you realise that psychoanalysis has done little or no work. It simply has sat back and said 'we have the theory of psychic reality which does not require us to have a theory of racism; so let the social scientists produce a theory of racism, which does not have a theory of the unconscious'. Then we add our model of psychic structuration to their theory of social structuration and hey presto, we have a fully fledged theory of racism.

Actually, we have nothing of the kind. The psychoanalysts think they have solved the interaction of the psychic to the social when all they have done is brought them into a purely mechanical and mutually reductive relation; and en route, they have given the social scientists an alibi for thinking that they do not need to explain the deeper, more unconscious reaches of the racist imagination, in order to understand its versatility and power of resistance to rational argument or structural reform.

This mutual inertia governing the relationship between the two disciplines continued throughout most of the twentieth century. It was not shaken by the rise and fall of Nazism, the decline of the Empire and the post colonial crisis of Western Culture. Yet throughout this period, there were also some notable attempts to make sense of it all and to establish a more integrated approach to understanding the psycho-social conditions of racism, with or without its 'Other Scene'.

In the late 1940's and early 50's as a new post fascist and post imperial world order began to dawn in the West, along with the cold war against communism, a new discipline developed in the USA aiming to provide a rational scientific basis upon which the forces of unreason in society could be combated, and the world made safe for democracy. The foundations for a social psychology of prejudice were laid by Gordon Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* (1950), a project designed from the outset to eliminate the need for a theory of the unconscious and a theory of racism.

On the side of psychology, Allport's theory was heavily cognitivist, drawing on and further elaborating the notion of stereotypification, advanced by gestalt psychologists and phenomenologists in the 1920's and 30's.

Stereotypes are here considered as a form of profile construction applied to information processing under conditions where there is either too much or too little data to work on. Stereotyping is regarded as both functional, in reducing cognitive dissonance between expectation and perception, and dysfunctional in reducing the flow of new information generated by social interactions. Stereotypes might be benign – and sustain positive images - or they might be negative, underwriting all manner of social discrimination, depending upon the circumstances in which they operated. As for the sociological side to the argument, Allport's theory was influenced in equal measure by Moreno's sociometry and, in its later development, by Mead's symbolic interactionism. Studies of the pressures of social conformity at work in group relations should be able to pinpoint the role of negative stereotypes of the outgroup in rendering normative the key mechanisms of scapegoating and deviancy amplification to be found in cultures of popular prejudice.

Prejudice theory served to eliminate the structural dimensions of both the psychic and the social by reducing both to their lowest common denominator in inter-personal processes. Methodologically the theory attempted to operationalise its constructs by introducing attitudinal scales and behavioural indices as measures of personality and group traits that predisposed to prejudice. Within this perspective then, racism or xenophobia (and the two were again conflated) was simply one amongst many examples of unreasonable behaviour governed by personal attitudes based on hostility, and/or ignorance. By implication, the practice of western democracy was associated with the education of the private citizen into norms of individual rationality that happily coincided with the values and aspirations of the American Way of Life (AWOL); this in turn would inoculate them against totalitarian ideologies (whether fascism or communism) associated with mass capitulation to collective forms of irrational race and class hatred.

The social psychology of prejudice was one of the great academic success stories of the second half of the 20th century and it continues to inform the dominant enlightenment model of how to combat popular racism through public education programmes. In its rush to arrive at a normative solution, however, prejudice theory destroyed the delicate dialectic between the structure of phantasy, the object which it invests with unconscious significance and the pattern of habitual association encoded in particular kinds of social discourse. Within its truncated conversation between the social and the psychic, the pattern of over determination in racial formations of power and identity became literally unthinkable.

Nevertheless there were alternatives - attempts to develop a theory of social ideology - and to combine it with a theory of the unconscious psychic process in order to make a more radical critique of the roots of racism in western culture and it is to these we must now turn.

The Odd Coupling: Marx and Freud with Adorno and Fanon

Theodor Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality*, and Franz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, are not often bracketed together as belonging within the same intellectual or political conjuncture. Adorno's book was published in 1947, in that brief interlude between the defeat of fascism and the onset of the cold war; Fanon's appeared in the 1960's at the height of the anticolonial struggle in North Africa. There are, self evidently, differences in approach and focus; *The Authoritarian Personality* is a study of the psycho-social roots of anti-Semitism and fascism in which, despite its commitment to critical, it makes use of attitudinal scales and all the other objectifying apparatus of American social science; *Black Skins, White Masks* is an impassioned study of the impact of French settler, colonialism and negrophobia on the Black African psyche, based on clinical case studies.

Yet despite these differences, the middle European Jewish philosopher, exiled in New York, and the Algerian psychiatrist, active in the national liberation struggle and in Parisian left wing intellectual circles, have written texts whose problematics have much in common. Both books attempted to couple key elements of Marxist and Freudian thinking in such a way as to push them beyond their encapsulation in the Enlightenment tradition; both writers sought to adumbrate a more self critical standpoint, capable of recognising the implication of the human sciences (including historical materialism and psychoanalysis) in the prosecution of western racism. Both authors, because of their own intellectual formation and social situations, remained deeply ambivalent about the direction in which their respective lines of thought were leading them, an ambivalence that surfaced in certain key contradictions in their arguments.

Adorno's book begins where his earlier *Dialectics of the Enlightenment* left off, namely with the dominative attitude of western reason. For Adorno both the bourgeois democracy and the Enlightenment were linked to the notion of capitalist modernity and the ethics of possessive individualism; that set of articulations had their psychic underpinning in a common personality structure centered on a rational calculating ego. Within this ideological frame and specifically under the influence of anti-Semitism, Jews were made to represent all the modes of life that western people have had to learn to repress in the transition to modernity; as Europe's internal others they are made to figure the forces of nature and the id, relics of the past, practicing a mimetic impulse that cannot be completely destroyed. In so far as Jews enter into the world of modernity (i.e. as business people and entrepreneurs), they are made to represent its 'bad' or savage side - the unacceptable face of capitalism.

In this way Adorno neatly turns the tables on prejudice theory. Prejudice theory sees racial prejudice as an archaic residue, operating in the substructure of the personality, and which under certain conditions might be

mobilised by political ideologies such as fascism to overwhelm rational thought. Adorno suggested that it is the very form of western rationality that constructs the Jew as the bearer of atavistic impulses and gives rise to racism as its necessary false consciousness.

Adorno then turned to psychoanalysis to provide an explanation as to why some individuals, and not others, formed within the same historical conditions, become active anti-Semites and supporters of racist or fascist causes. For this purpose he drew extensively on familiar sources – Sterba’s 1942 study and the Freud’s theory of male homosexuality and paranoia. For Adorno then, the boy’s ambivalent submission to strong paternal authority is the key to understanding the male authoritarian personality. In this view he is very close to Wilhelm Reich, another German exile living in New York. Reich’s *Mass Psychology of Fascism* had already pointed the finger at what he called ‘the puritanical sex economy of the patriarchal bourgeois family’ as the nursery of fascism. In Reich’s view, the popularity of regimes of homosocial racial bonding promoted by the Hitler Jugend lay in the fact that they provided a legitimate outlet for the expression of passive homosexuality via worship of the fuhrer father figure, whilst at the same time making ‘weak effeminate’ Jews the target of displaced male aggressively.

While Reich focused on fascist youth culture as providing the anti-libidinal defenses or character armouring needed to deal with the adolescent body’s unruly desires, Adorno preferred to focus on the social conditions which might facilitate the development of authoritarian personalities: chronic economic insecurity, mass unemployment, rapid social change, and cultural anomie. Under these conditions, trust in conventional authority structures begins to break down, and releases all kinds of fears, anxieties and negative feelings. Peoples whose character formation is based on a rigid and punitive superego would lack the psychic defenses needed to deal creatively with the ambivalent positionalities created by uncertain times. Instead they would need to identify with strong authority figures, especially if these were lacking in their own families, leaders who could embody ‘strong’ solutions, and publicly sanction attacks upon scapegoats whilst relieving the perpetrators of any personal feelings of guilt.

As Adorno’s study proceeds, however, the analysis moves ever further away from its initial Marxist starting point and the Reichian focus on collective psychopathology, and ever closer toward a reductionist account of the social conditions of individual psychopathology. In my view this shift has less to do with the invocation of Freud’s theory of paranoia than the choice of research methodology. With the help of Elsie Frenkel Brunswick, a social psychologist, Adorno devised the famous ‘F’ scale, combining measures of ethnocentrism, political and cultural conservatism, and racial intolerance into a single attitudinal profile. Whether or not he wanted to give his study a veneer of academic respectability and get

its arguments taken seriously by the intellectual establishment of the day, and whether or not this strategy was over determined unconsciously by a disavowed desire to assimilate into AWOL, there is no doubt that this attempt to operationalise a complex theory in narrow empiricist terms served to radically decontextualise much of the argument, and allow it to be read from a purely psychologicist point of view.

As a statement of its time, Adorno's concept of the authoritarian personality had the advantage of rendering fascism and communism into equivalent instances in a way that simply effaced the ideological differences (not to mention the world war that had just been waged) between them. This certainly suited the emergent cold war mentality of the USA. Of course it could be argued that these differences were more apparent than real. The proclaimed internationalism of Soviet style communism was given the lie by the virulent anti-Semitism and covert nationalism practiced under its regimes. But the fact is that in Adorno's model the concrete forms of racism and nationalism are only contingently related to the ideal typology of authoritarianism which, in turn, is simply conflated with fascism. The claim that the study had discovered a new 'anthropological species' – in the figure of the omni-prejudiced fascist - now reads like a rather desperate attempt to provide some empirical foundation for the Hegelian teleology that underlay the Frankfurt school's doom laded prognostications about the future of western democracy. It is perhaps no coincidence that the personality traits associated with the 'omniprejudiced fascist' could just as easily be found in the heroes of rugged American individualism – a connection that Martin Scorsese was to make brilliantly explicit in *Taxi Driver*, where a screwed up, sexually bigoted ex marine cabbie goes on the rampage, committing a serial murders against New York low life only to wake up the next morning to find himself headlined in the press as an All American Hero.

This is just the kind of link that Fanon would have made, as it were from the other side.

Writing in the context of anticolonial struggle, he distinguished between three kinds of violence – the systemic racism through which colonialism attempts to reduce its subjects to subhuman status; the individualised black on black violence which arises from identification with the aggressor and the inversion of political hatred into neurotic self hatred; and finally the revolutionary violence which liberates blacks from the structures of oppression that have imposed a false white self upon them.

Fanon's project is complementary to Adorno's in a number of ways. Both of course were outsiders writing from a standpoint that was highly critical of the liberal enlightenment tradition. Just as Adorno is concerned to disentangle Marxism from its implication in dominative reason, by means of psychoanalysis, so Fanon sought to rescue psychoanalysis from its eurocentric bias, which he sees as legitimating its abusive clinical applications within the domain of colonial psychiatry and anthropology, by introducing a Marxian perspective.

He began the task with his famous critique of Octave Mannoni's theory of a 'colonial dependency complex'. In his book *Prospero and Caliban* Mannoni had argued that the coming of the colonisers was unconsciously expected and even desired by the future subject peoples. On the basis of clinical evidence Mannoni suggested that the germ of this complex is latent in the adult Malagasy from childhood - i.e. it is a genetic and real inferiority. This quasi infantile dependency gives rise to insatiable and unrealistic demands for adult autonomy, associated with the struggles for political independence. Mannoni's model, which incidentally he subsequently repudiated, is derived from Adler's notion of the inferiority complex. Paradoxically Adler, as a socialist, was unique in the Freudian circle for his concern to link and even derive frames of unconscious mind from social conditions. Fanon in fact adopts a more properly Adlerian perspective when he writes 'if there is an inferiority complex it is the outcome of a double process: primarily economic and subsequently the internalisation - or better the epidermalisation - of this inferiority'. If the black African patient is suffering from an inferiority complex, and desires to be white, this desire has to be derived from the social structure and the fact that he lives in a society which makes his inferiority complex possible by proclaiming the superiority of one race over another.

For Fanon, the aim of critical psychotherapy was to demystify both the external social and the internal psychic reality by demonstrating their dialectical interdependence. Intervention, he argued, must be at the level of both the individual and the group - to make the patient conscious of his unconscious desire and abandon attempts at hallucinatory whitening, but also to act in the direction of changing the social structure - and hence to transcend individualism, and become involved in the group, in the collective struggle for liberation.

The focus of Fanon's work is thus the interplay between the material and social as this is mediated through the psychic envelope that racism wraps around the body. He brings to his analysis two dimensions of understanding which are utterly lacking in previous work on racism. The first derives from his experience as an Algerian psychiatrist, treating African patients within the framework of French colonial psychiatry; the second comes from his formation as a French intellectual heavily influenced by the work of Sartre and Lacan. The combination of these two perspectives enabled him to look at racism and colonialism from the point of view of their impact on the black psyche. Blacks are no longer present in Fanon's psycho-analysis merely as shadows thrown onto the wall by white projective identification; they appear in their own right, as historical agents fully engaged in the process of their own psychic formation. He looks clinically, and also with passion, at how racism entraps its subjects, and imposes alienating identifications upon them. For this

purpose he draws heavily on Sartre's theory of objectification (the famous 'en soi' adumbrated in *Being and Nothingness*) and Lacan's seminal essay on *The mirror stage of ego development*.

From Lacan he obtains the central idea that the structure of language splits the subject (i.e. between a speaking and a spoken subject) in a way that also constitutes the Other as the repressed, unspoken 'third' party which makes the discourse possible. When Lacan stated that the Unconscious is the discourse of the other, this is what he meant. But what happens when the subject is interpellated in racist discourse? In that case the splitting of the subject in and by language becomes itself racialised; the effect is to insinuate a split between a real but bad black self (i.e. fully embodied but denied full access, as a speaking subject, to the symbolic order) and a good but false white self (i.e. a disembodied subject who can however speak volubly, but only in his masters voice). Fanon insists that this alienation effect is not only produced by language – it becomes active existentially in the physical interface between coloniser and colonised through the medium of the racist gaze.

Fanon is concerned here with how rituals of racist misrecognition are introjected - his word is epidermalised - so as to induce a form of a narcissistic trauma. Following on from Sartre's model of the 'petrification' of the subject's desire in the look of the Other, Fanon suggested that when blacks discover themselves objectified in the Negrophobic, or even merely the clinical, gaze of the white colonialist, in so far as they recognise themselves in that structure of misrecognition, they can only become Other to themselves.

Fanon's emphasis on the *epidermalisation* of racist discourse, on the way it 'gets under the skin' and undermines the integrity of the black bodily ego, plus his advocacy of revolutionary violence as a means of disalienation has led many cultural commentators, especially in the USA to see him as a pioneer and champion of black, and even afrocentric identity politics. Fanon undoubtedly saw himself as a cultural nationalist, albeit in a largely tactical sense – it was, he believed, a necessary stage along the road to pan-African socialism. He canvassed the return to cultural roots in order to create a sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium in which the damage wreaked by colonialism could be worked through and undone. He certainly tended to argue that black pathology was a function of contact with white society, and that left to their own devices black societies were incapable of producing neuroses. He was also highly critical of the cosmopolitan mind set of the black middle class. Underlying both stances was a normative view of the black psyche based on an organicist model of culture and cultural oppression. In terms with which Mrs. Thatcher might well agree, Fanon argued that disjuncture between family and nation leads to social anomie; his vision of the healthy, liberated black civil society follows W. E. Du Bois in seeing the family as its essential corner stone. Or to put it another way, Fanon's analysis having boldly advanced psychoanalysis beyond the

consulting room and the white middle class reference group into the thick of the battle against western colonialism, suddenly retreats back into the 'familialism' of classical Freudianism, in proposing a corporatist vision of the 'good society'. At this point he uncritically re-occupies the ground that Adorno and, to a lesser extent Reich, had cleared in their critique of the emotional foundations of fascism.

Many of these attitudes come out in Fanon's famous case studies of two of his patients – whom he calls Capecia and Veneuse. Capecia is a mulatto. She has only one possibility and one concern, Fanon writes: to turn white. She is barred from herself, and he adds, may she add no more to the mass of imbecilities. Veneuse is a neurotic intellectual, and for him his colour is only an attempt to explain his psychic structure. If this objective difference did not exist he would have manufactured it out of nothing. Everything about him can be explained by his devaluation of self (self hatred) consequent on his fear of maternal abandonment. The 'crime' of both patients for Fanon is thus that they have both epidermalised colonial ideology and found neurotic rather than political solutions to their internal conflicts.

As can be imagined Fanon's harsh and unforgiving portrayal of these two patients has become the subject of heated controversy. There have been no shortages of feminists who have argued that Fanon's unsympathetic view of Capecia is typically misogynistic. And no shortage of psychoanalysts who have suggested that if Fanon dissociates himself so strongly from Veneuse, it is precisely because he has so much in common with him. Afrocentric and black roots radicals then enter the fray to suggest that these attacks on Fanon are motivated by racial spite and part of a wider attempt by the white intellectual establishment to discredit a revolutionary black thinker.

Fanon's take up has been uneven, to the point of lopsided. His work was initially embraced enthusiastically by the student and countercultural left in the 1960's as a part of their general anticolonialism. Once African independence came and brought civil wars and a whole lot of other complications in its aftermath, many of this generation turned towards more home grown interests and pursuits: green politics, feminism and finally, of course, post modernism. The antipsychiatry movement, strong in both France and Italy, and linked to Libertarian left, claimed Fanon as one of its chief inspirations in the struggle to de-institutionalise mental health care, close the asylums, end compulsory medication and ECT treatments. But the romantic view of madness – and more especially schizophrenia - as a metaphor for capitalist alienation, the attempt to portray the schizophrenic as a poet or revolutionary manqué, which came to be associated with antipsychiatry through the work of R. D. Laing and David Cooper, all this would have horrified Fanon, who not only accepted the classical Freudian distinction between neurosis and psychosis, but as we have seen equated both with political false consciousness.

He might not have been much more sympathetic towards recent attempts to focus on patterns of racial discrimination within the mental health system, and to create a transcultural psychiatry more responsive to the nuances of life style that shape the patients attitude and behaviour. Fanon the social revolutionary would have roundly condemned, as abjectly reformist, any attempt to ameliorate the black patient's lot that did not transform their social and material conditions at the same time. Indeed one of the least recognised influences on his work was the transcultural school of French psychiatry that took just this line and whose complicity with colonialism Fanon was much concerned to expose.

Within the world of black or afro-American cultural studies, the story has been very different. Fanon's star has risen steadily to its current point of ascendancy where there are whole journals, conferences, and academic careers devoted to the pursuit of 'Fanon Studies'. His corpus is fought over by essentialists and post structuralists, by those who claimed him as the forefather of afro-centrism, and those whose see him as a practitioner of post colonial studies *avant le lettre*. Yet by definition, such scholarly debates are about situating or celebrating Fanon, not about going beyond the limits necessarily set by his life and times. But nor is any such critical engagement forthcoming from the arguably best placed to do so, namely his fellow psychiatrists.

Within the psychoanalytic profession Fanon's work was almost completely ignored during his lifetime, and continues to be scarcely referred to – let alone deferred to – in the literature. There are a number of reasons for this. He was not, it is true, a profound clinician; his case histories, compared to those written by Ernst Binswanger, Manfred Bleuler, Francoise Dolto, or Marion Milner are perfunctory and one dimensionalⁱⁱⁱ. Nor did he produce any new models or reformulations of intrapsychic process, like Bion, Lacan, Kohut or Balint^{iv}. He did not manage to combine theoretical originality with therapeutic innovation like Freud himself, or D.W. Winnicott, Melanie Klein or Maud Mannoni.

But the suspicion remains that these shortcomings, if that is what they are, are not the main reason for his neglect. His 'original fault' in the eyes of the analytic establishment was that he broke the analytic rule distinguishing the patients internal world (which is the domain proper of psychoanalysis) from external social reality (which is supposedly none of its business); he abandoned the analytic epoch for cultural interventionism, and in so far as he did so, he betrayed his true vocation as a 'doctor of souls'.

How should this charge be answered? It may be the case that in some instances Fanon's ideological enthusiasm clouded his clinical judgement. And it may be that for all his political revolutionism, Fanon was

in strictly professional terms, a conservative thinker. But then this is hardly unique. In fact in the history of psychoanalysis it is the norm. Those whose ideas or practice have challenged or transformed the internal culture of the profession have tended to be conservative on wider social and political questions. This is certainly the case with Klein, Winnicott, Bion, and Balint. But equally the political radicals - Reich and Adler - have exercised an altogether retrograde influence vis a vis the sophistication of analytic ideas. Only in the case of Ferenczi do we find someone whose work is capable of pushing at both the external boundaries and internal limits of Freudianism at one and the same time.

Fanon in fact does not fit into the either/or category; he deployed ideas at the cutting edge of philosophical and analytic thinking in his time to explore the psychic violence committed by racist and colonialist regimes in the name of a 'superior' western reason. En route he turned Adorno's negative dialectics off its Hegelian head and onto its materialist feet by demonstrating how racist discourse is embodied in and through the desire of the Other. As such his work constitutes a fresh starting point for a consideration of unconscious racism and how it might be critically and politically engaged.

New Directions

In the last decade of the twentieth century, as virulent movements of nationalism and racism emerged in the 'old countries' of Europe, especially in wake of collapsing communist regimes, psychoanalytic ideas became increasingly central to attempts to make sense of these 'post colonial' or 'post modern' forms. The notion that racism (or nationalism) could be understood as simply a displaced – and hence 'false' type of class consciousness, no longer stood up once it became clear that class - at least in its Marxian sense - was no longer a sufficient concept to explain either the persistence or the transformation of structural inequalities in these societies.

The impact of feminism not only switched the focus from class to gender, but served to highlight those aspects of racism which psychoanalysis had always made central to its account - namely the sexual dynamics of racial desire and hatred. For some this made it possible to revisit libido theory, if only to overturn its patriarchal bias through a radical re-reading of the desiring machine'. At the same time the Lacanian 'revolution' made possible a cultural turn unhampered by any reference to the instincts. It was cultural theorists who increasingly turned to Freudian texts in search of clues to the power which signifiers of race and nation continued to exert over the social imaginary, especially in the realm of popular culture. Some profited from a deconstructive reading of Freud, to challenge the 'universalism' of his formulation

of the Oedipus and complete the decolonisation of psychoanalysis itself; others engaged with ethnic identity politics by interrogating pre-oedipal positions linked to Freud's notion of a 'narcissism of minor differences'. Finally, and perhaps most radically, there were attempts to link the body politics of racism with Freudian notions of the death instinct, the uncanny and the compulsion to repeat. We will deal with each of these developments briefly in turn.

Is the Oedipus Universal?

One of the earliest debates between psychoanalysis and the other human sciences concerned the applicability of Freud's reading of the Oedipal myth to non western cultures. Just how invariant was the oedipal triangle as a foundation stone of the 'law of sexual difference'. There has been no shortage of critics to argue that the attempt to create a general theory of the human condition out of an ancient Greek myth and on the basis of clinical data obtained from neurotic white middle class Viennese is simply a case of blatant ethnocentrism. Freud's defenders, whilst conceding that some of his attitudes and opinions are undoubtedly those of a 'man of his culture and time', nevertheless argue that his fundamental discoveries transcend these limitations and, with suitable modification, can be applied to other cultures and other times^v. Not surprisingly his debate has run and run and has been given new impetus by the cultural relativism preached by some forms of post modern epistemology.

Anthropologists took an early interest in Freudian concepts. Although most remained sceptical of Freud's own anthropological speculations, especially his theory of the parricidal 'primal horde', many found his formulation of the Oedipus complex of great pertinence to their ethnographic work. Malinowski, in his field study of Trobriand Islanders had argued the case for a matrilineal variant in which the maternal uncle rather than the father plays the key role in the oedipal triangle. In this culture the young man must become a mother's brother to his sister's children when he grows up and hence must renounce identification with his father at an early stage of the game. In other words different patterns of authority, power and kinship generate different structures of emotional attachment and conflict.

Ramanujan in his more recent study of the Indian Oedipus has argued along rather similar lines, the deep structure of the myth is the same but the narrative viewpoint which governs the unfolding of the plot is that of the mother/son. In so far as a father figure is involved at all the conflict is enacted through surrogates. The usual pattern here is for the son to submit to the father's authority and then to be allowed access to the mother's desire. In other words we are dealing with a reversed or negative oedipal structure where mother/son forms a mutually seductive couple and the father is jealous of the son's erotic attachment to mum. The

daughter equivalently has a strong identification with her father and takes her mother's place in the field of paternal desire. This structure of feeling and phantasy therefore underwrites the rules of the Indian caste system which both demands the absolute submission of the son to the father and uses the bond with the mother to tie him into loyalty to the family. Here once again we have a version that does not conform to the European norm.

The recent republication of Wulf Sach's *Black Hamlet*, the classic psychoanalytic biography of a black South African healer written by his Jewish South African analyst, first published in 1937, has served to highlight many of the issues of cultural relativism focused by the original Oedipus debate. In her introduction to the new edition, Jacqueline Rose, writing from a literary Lacanian perspective, makes no bones about the historical implication of psychoanalytic theory and practice in ethnocentric constructions of the Other; but she also argued that pushed to its limit the notion of projective identification opens up a symbolic space in which it is possible to interrogate just these assumptions. Ironically it may have been Sach's own political identification with the cause of Black Liberation, his desire to free his patient from his neurotic entanglements so he could fully participate in the struggle to emancipate his own people, that lead him to both assimilate the distinctive features of African Oedipus, as described by Ortigues, to a Eurocentric model and to foreclose that space of uncertainty and unknowing where a proper working through of cultural differences might proceed in the conduct of the talking cure.

As these examples show there are 'family resemblances' between different oedipal forms but also crucial differences. It is not the case that the positive Greek Oedipus is the universal norm and all the others either variants, or that where the 'normal' features do not exist there are no oedipal relations at all. Rather within the erotically desirable circle of kin (including servants and other members of the household) a particular culture selects certain relations for oedipalisation, for example, as the source of its myths and the focus of psychic conflict, because these relations are structurally significant for its reproduction. It also follows that some relations which are erotically charged may not in fact be 'oedipalised' at all. This raises the intriguing possibility that in western cultures where 'race relations' have become increasingly sexualised, this may be the result of a process of de-oedipalisation, or rather a cultural regression to pre-oedipal formations of self and other.

Piggy backing on the Oedipus debate, there is an increasingly powerful current of work, primarily by psychoanalysts from non western cultures questioning the universality of Freud's first topological model. The picture Freud depicted of the 'skin encapsulated ego' caught between the blind instinctual drives of the 'id' and the moralising collective voice of the superego, could be read as an accurate enough transcription of the

psychodynamics of western individualism; but in societies where the 'we self' predominates over the 'I self' as the matrix of identification, where consequently conventional ego boundaries are blurred and symbiotic relations is the norm, the notion of what is a 'transitional object' clearly has to undergo revision. As psychoanalysis develops further outside Europe, many of its key concepts can expect to come under further pressure, leading no doubt to an enrichment of both theoretical vocabulary and clinical practice.

Male Phantasies or The authoritarian personality revisited:

Almost all the work inspired by Adorno, and which derives ultimately from Freud's 1922 paper on paranoia, focused on the oedipal structuration of racist desire. As a result the forms of pre-oedipal identification and aggressively which the work of Melanie Klein and her followers has done so much to put on the psychoanalytic map, have, until very recently, been virtually ignored. The publication of the Klaus Theweleit's *Male Phantasies* changed all that.

Theweleit's book is a study of letters written home by young men serving in the German Freikorps, after the first world war. The Freikorps was an elite body, many of whose members subsequently became leading supporters of the Nazi party. Theweleit wanted to show through a close 'Freudian' reading of these texts, how the emotional roots of racism and fascism can be traced back to the way male psychology is organised by and into a military machine. He takes a leaf out of Reich's *Mass Psychology of Fascism* and in particular his notion of body armour and argued that the rituals of militarism wrap the body up in a physical and emotional straightjacket and provide an institutionalised defence against disturbing sexual desires, by giving them a perverse sadistic organisation.

That would however be true of any military machine in the world (with the possible exception of the Cuban army, that supposed last bastion of Stalinism in the Western hemisphere, which has its own inimitable style of marching, half way between a shimmy and a samba). Unless you take the view that all armies are intrinsically fascistic, the argument does not get us very far, and certainly represents little advance on Reich's own reductive applications of libido theory. However at this point Theweleit introduced a new twist into the argument; he suggested that the unique contribution of fascist and racist discourses with their essentialised binaries of (good) Self and (bad) Other is to provide a second line of defence against regression to more fluid and polymorphously perverse forms of identification set in motion by the infantilising effects of authoritarian regimes. He argued that the life destroying reality principles that are mobilised in fascism cannot be analysed using classical Freudian formulations of the oedipal complex but instead require us to look at what is in play in pre-oedipal structures.

For this purposes Theweleit has drawn extensively on Deleuze and Guattari's famous notion of *machine desirante* - a sucking pumping machine linking mothers breast and baby's mouth in an symbiotic matrix of libidinal energy 'without subjects'. In their book *AntiOedipus* Deleuze and Guattari argued that this psyborg entity constitutes the very aliveness of the real, characterised as it is by teeming polysemy, and an endless flux of desire; this productive power, which, they argued, is that of the Unconscious itself, is by definition associated with the fertility of women's bodies. Theweleit now takes over and argued that it is precisely this feminine force of production that is so threatening to the patriarchal order - and hence has to be crushed, stamped out, or otherwise neutralised before being reinvented in a monolithic order invested with a sterile dynamism dominated by the death drive. That, in his view, is the psychodynamic work which fascist ideology does on behalf of the soldier males of the Freikorps and whose effects can be read between the lines of the letters they sent home to their mothers.

The recent emergence of the racist skinhead youth movements in Germany, Austria, Scandinavia, the UK and the USA, often with affiliations to far right nationalist, or neo nazi groups would seem to argue for the prescience of much of Theweleit's analysis. These 'home boys' with their sentimental odes to 'motherlove' tattooed on one arm and death of glory swastikas emblazoned on the other certainly seem to have found fascist symbolism and racist acts a means of asserting a 'strong' form of masculinity that is otherwise disintegrating all around them. The collapse of the culture of manual labourism along with its patriarchal codes of apprenticeship and inheritance, coupled with the de-territorialisation of related communities of aspiration would certainly point to a radical 'de-oedipalisation' of subject positions. However, this may just as easily mobilise white projective identifications with the macho stance of black rap and street culture, setting in motion a very different dynamic based on racial envy. Once again it is dangerous to 'read off' the object choice - however racialised- from some presumed common psychological disposition of the group.

The main difficulty with this argument however, is its practical corollary - namely that the only viable anti racist strategy is to somehow persuade these boys to embrace their repressed feminine side and explore the polymorphously perverse possibilities opened up by the post modern world. Not only is this to set up a normative libertarian ideal which is highly contradictory in its own terms, but it obviously invites a further defensive 'hardening' of the racist body armour on the part of these young men^{vi}. But are there other ways of looking at the problem?

A Narcissism of Minor Differences? Racist desire and its Disavowal

Once pre-oedipal relations became the centre of attention, the way was open to shift the focus from the more overt rationalisations of racism to a consideration of its secondary gains – the more covert pleasures afforded by racist desire.

In this perspective there has been renewed interest in Freud's notion of a 'narcissism of minor differences'. In a famous passage in his paper Freud commented:

'every time two families become connected by marriage each of them thinks itself superior to the other. Of two neighbouring towns each is the others most jealous rival. Closely related races keep each other at arms length. The south German cannot endure the north German, the Englishman casts every kind of aspersion on the Scot, the Spaniard despises the Portuguese. And elsewhere ..we are no longer astonished that greater differences should lead to an almost insuperable repugnance such as the Gallic people feel for the German, the Aryan for the Semite and the white races for the coloured'.

Underlying this argument is Freud's view of the role of aggression in narcissism. As he stated:

'In the undisguised antipathies and aversions which people feel towards strangers with whom they have to do, we may recognise the expression of narcissism, that works for the self preservation of the individuals as though the occurrence of any divergence from their own particular lines of development involved a criticisms of them and a demand for their alteration'.

Freud's theory of narcissism seemingly sanctions the conflation between 'fear of the stranger' or xenophobia, national chauvinism and racism. But is that actually consistent with his formulation? He started by stating what amounts to a law: the greater the proximity/similarity of the Other the greater its perceived threat to narcissistic investments in the Ideal Self, hence the greater the fear evoked and the stronger the urge to invent difference and assert distance. So far so good. This is a great advance on the entire liberal and humanist platitudinising that suggest that the more alike we are the easier it should be for us to get on, and that after all there is only one race – the human race. Where Marx saw merely a dumb generality, without purchase on the real world, Freud detected a cover story which seeks to deny the narcissistic dynamics at work in these identifications.

But then Freud added a rider – in moving from 'minor differences' to major ones – let us say in moving from ethnocentrism to racism - we are, according to this argument, simply seeing the same principle 'writ large'. This is the fatal leap in the argument which many Freudians have been only too keen to take. Major differences, for example, differences that are based on structures of power and domination, are not simply interpersonal or intergroup differences aggregated. That is the prime fallacy of methodological individualism. An explanation that might plausibly apply to relations of sibling rivalry, or the territorial rivalry between two neighbouring gangs, or football supporters, and which might also apply to rivalries between socialist or

Christian sects, or between different groups of black immigrants, none of this translates into a model for understanding Imperial rivalries, genocidal attacks, or systematic racial discrimination. These structures simply operate at another level of determination. This is firstly because where the other sex, race, nation or class is concerned, difference is primary or constitutive and similarity is, at best something constructed after the event. Secondly, in terms of Freud's formula we might expect heterophobic patterns only in cases where there is some demonstrable similarity - something sufficiently alike to make potentially invidious comparison almost inevitable, and hence requiring some move to foreclose the possibility. But when Freud is talking about the 'greater differences' between whites and blacks he is clearly talking about the *absence* of demonstrable similarities. Now according to the logic of his argument this should play on an unconscious fear that Blacks are really the Same as Whites under the skin, and this in turn will call forth, through the circuit of its disavowal, a strategy of *de-differentiation* applied to the object namely: 'black all look the same - you can't tell one from the other (unlike us whites)'. And this is indeed the case.

Xenophobia, or its more general term heterophobia, thus turns out to imply a quite different structure of feeling than racial hatred. This is not to say that rivalries between close similars (que narcissism of minor differences) cannot become racialised – as the horrible example of ethnic cleansing in ex Yugoslavia clearly demonstrates - but this entails a qualitative transformation not a mere quantitative increase in the amount of libidinal energy invested in the construction.

Much of the most interesting recent work has therefore concentrated on spelling out just what this transformation consists of. What happens when narcissism, and pre-oedipal object relations generally, become racialised, what changes and what stays the same about the structure of the phantasy and its object?

Perhaps the most radical attempt to outline a theory of racist desire, from within a Lacanian perspective, comes from the work of Daniel Sibony. Sibony asked – what do racists want from racism, and he answers – to eliminate the desire of the other. It is the enjoyment of being black, the pleasure Jews take in their Jewishness that is hated because it represents a joy in being alive and in being different. Racist desire then is a form of what Ernest Jones called aphanasis. The aim of racist discourse, especially in its institutionalised forms, is not to impose the State's own desires on the Other (as in assimilationist strategies), but to expel the Other from the realm of desire, and hence from life itself. In this sense, Sibony says, all racism has a genocidal impulse.

In terms of the structure of this desire Sibony noted that it takes as its preferred object the body that leaves nothing to be desired, a body that is immaculately conceived, pure, phallic, immortal – and dead. The stiff

and the statue are the model bodies of the 'master race' and as such are juxtaposed to the body of the subject race, a body which is fecund, secretive, excretive, mortal, blemished, impure - and indubitably alive.

Following Theweleit, Sibony created a dual image of the racialised body politic, on one side formed by the figure of Thanatos, on the other by Eros, and he too attributes the split representation to a perverse dialectic of narcissistic identification. But rather than seeing this as a simple polarity, he suggested that one of the more unconscious functions of racist discourse is to re-animate the dead phantom body, to invest it magically with a biological life force- which is precisely its 'race'; it is this which secures the master body's perpetual regeneration, and ensures that the transmission of its powers of social propagation from generation to generation do not have to pass through the defiles of sexual difference, or historical individuality.

This is a very fruitful formulation and one which I have developed further in my own work on the racialisation of the body within 'home boy' cultures and 'homely racism'. Janine Chassaguet Smirgel has also elaborated on this line of thought focusing on the maternal body as a phantasy object within a racist and national discourse, she insisted that its idealisation is inscribed in territorial claims of every kind, from the assertion of autochthony to 'we were here first' nativism; this sense of belonging always contains within it the germs (sic) of a more or less violent repudiation of the Other and indeed of the symbolic order as a whole.

Homely racism also has as its necessary correlate a fascination, and abhorrence, of the unhomely – what Freud called the *unheimlich* or uncanny. Sibony suggested this is because three dimensional human beings, for example, 'real' Blacks or Jews come to bear an uncanny resemblance to the stick figures created by the racist imagination; as such they evoke ambivalent feelings associated 'the other scene' populated as it is with aliens, zombies, ghosts, psyborgs and all the other hybrid beings whom we imagine to have taken our rightful place as denizens of the 'first home' that is the mother's body. The visible presence of these flesh and blood shadows in everyday social encounter serves to unblock racial phantasy from its compulsive repetition by re-animating it in the register of the real – it is always a story about a real incident that literally authorises the phantasy. The function of the scapegoat in this perspective is to unfold a narrative that justifies our own 'right of return' to the primordial home in order to expel 'unwanted intruders' and make the world safe for our own kind.

The uncanny is also a key feature in Julia Kristeva's analysis of racism and nationalism. However, for her what evokes the characteristic figures of the *unheimlich*, is not so much the Other (class, race, nation, sex) in the external world but the Other Within- in the words of the title to her book 'the stranger we are to ourselves'. This sense of the foreign in the midst of the familiar she relates to the death drive, or what Bion has presciently called the 'internal saboteur'. The diffuse narcissistic anxiety experienced in the face of what cannot be symbolically represented in and by the self is linked by Kristeva to a state of abjection.

By this she meant the sense of self abandonment habitually associated with what is repudiated about bodily needs and their satisfaction, and which comes to be socially anchored to habits of habitats of those living on the margins of society, on the other side of the race, class or sex tracks.

Yet Kristeva also saw this position of liminality from its other side, as offering the immigrant and the exile a freedom from the burdens of historical representation carried by those who feel they have to defend the physical integrity of the nation or the race. It is just this transcendence of an imposed inheritance, and the license it gives to invent new forms of identity and belonging, that becomes the focus of envy on the part of 'the indigenous'. A Lacanian version then of the classic Freudian theme of the return of the repressed.

Sibony and Kristeva tend to follow Sartre in deriving an epistemology of racism from an ontology of 'the racist'. The work of Slavoj Žižek proceeds in the opposite direction and derives structures of racist feeling and phantasy from the epistemophobic structures of the body politic and its modes of unconscious representation. Žižek too homes in on the notion of the *unheimlich* as an indivisible remainder/reminder of otherness that resists symbolisation in language. For him the foundation myths of race and nation are premised on a primordial act of disavowal: they assert that nothing can be lacking in the reality guaranteed by their written or unwritten constitutions of the sovereign subject. It is precisely this foreclosure that in Žižek's view underwrites a constitutive split between the universal categories of citizenship and the particularism of identitarian politics based on race or ethnicity. At the same time it founds a powerful principle of racist or ethnicist re-iteration – the compulsion to repeat (or somatise, or act out) what is unrepresentable about desire and its other scene. For what is repeated, across all the banal insults and slurs, slogans, graffiti, and jokes that make up the everyday rhetorics, and pragmatics of racism, is a degree zero of representation an 'x marks the spot that is not y'. It is this inscription which draws a fatal line under the feet of those whom the body politic will assign to the side of life or death and which also triggers performatively the passage to acts of gratuitous racial violence, through its equivalence with the real.

In the last ten years many of these Lacanian ideas have been taken up and developed further by writers operating within the paradigms of feminism and post colonial studies. In some cases, for example in the work of Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, Lacanian terms are deployed to underwrite a post structuralist model of 'decentred subjectivity' which is then made into a cultural paradigm of a certain version of post modern identity. Bhabha's notion of 'mimicry' for example derives largely from Fanon's appropriation of Lacan's model of the mirror stage. Mimicry here is a device through which the colonial subject subverts his master's voice and gestures in the very act of echoing their cadences. Then by a shift in problematic that is never properly conceptualised, Bhabha began to write in almost identical terms about mimicry in post colonial settings as if all that was involved in the decolonisation process was a reconfiguration/reversal of the 'play of signifiers'. The implicit idealism of the Lacanian theory of desire, lack and its relation to the real, based as it ultimately is on Hegel's master/slave dialectic, comes out strongly here. Spivak's notion of a subaltern subject who 'does not speak' but for whom the ideal speech situation is to throttle the loquaciousness of the master, in a reverse form of aphantasia, is another example of how psychoanalytic ideas can be wrenched out of context and twisted to lend support for normative political projects with which they have little affinity.

One of the main criticisms that can be leveled at this body of work is that it is highly normative. It posits an ideal typical racial, colonial or post colonial encounter with The Other, which is illustrated only indirectly, usually through the citation of literary texts or films, but in a way which bears only the flimsiest relation to the empirical complexities of real, historically variable racist positions and practices. Kristeva's figures of The Exile or The Orphan are metaphorical constructions, not recognisable social beings.

This process of abstraction is also related to the style of presentation, especially the penchant for writing dense prose sprinkled with obscure but poetic or scientific images after the laconic manner of the master (sic). Sibony for example has not been translated into English for the very good reason that he is virtually untranslatable. Even more than Lacan, his style is full of allusive word play that hints at plumbing unconscious depths but does little to clarify the argument and in fact seems primarily designed to impress the reader with the author's verbal dexterity and encyclopedic knowledge. Žižek's work is often difficult, relies on puns and double entendres which only make sense to someone steeped in the entire oeuvre of Western philosophy, linguistics and the human sciences as well having an intimate grasp of the finer points of Lacanian theory. A familiarity with contemporary film, popular culture and political debate also helps! Bhabha and Spivak are equally at home doing headstands on the high wire of post colonial theory or deconstructing popular movies but it must be said that little of their stream of theoretical consciousness

comes down to earth for long enough to dwell usefully on the specifics of conjunctural analysis at the level of policy or practice. Julia Kristeva stands out as someone who writes clearly and elegantly, and is concerned to take the reader along with her as she worries at a problem.

Despite this caveat, this is an enduringly important body of work, albeit one that has yet to be taken up by the psychoanalytic profession itself. The reasons are not difficult to find. Almost without exception these ‘Lacanian’ are academics whose primary formation and interests have been in the arts, humanities or social sciences, and who have engaged with psychoanalytic ideas en passant. The ‘difficulty’ of the texts and their seeming irrelevance to the clinical setting has given analysts a good alibi for ignoring them. In general the profession remains closeted in discussions of clinical technique and interpretation and leaves questions of metapsychology to others ‘better equipped’. At one level, this is somewhat surprising given that the scope of analytic treatment is increasingly being extended outwards from the private consulting room, clinic and mental hospital, to the fields of social work, education and institutional management. It is in just these contexts that issues of racial discrimination have come to the fore. Yet at another level, for the reasons I discussed at the outset, the professional culture and conventions of psychoanalytic practice militate against any such wider engagement and ‘race’ remains its special blind spot.

Conclusion: After Lawrence

So what finally is the payoff for adding a psychoanalytic perspective to the understanding of unconscious racism? First of all let us be clear that it has nothing to do with providing psychotherapy for racists! It might have something, or indeed a lot, to do with making the psychoanalytic profession more aware of ethnocentric assumptions in its own clinical theory and practice, and in persuading it to tackle of the forms of institutional racism operating in its procedures for recruiting both analysts and analysands.

More generally however a case must be made that psychoanalytic insights provide a powerful resource for getting to grips with some of the trickier aspects of both popular and institutional racism, provided they are applied in a non reductive manner, and in a way that supplements rather than replaces other readings.

With this in mind let us return to the scene of the racist crime with which we began or rather to its ‘other scene’. What can we add to our understanding of this bizarre mis-en-scene? The suspects are of course consciously ‘unaware’ that they are being filmed; if they knew that the police had bugged their houses we might expect them to have been more circumspect in their behaviour. However, the fact is that even in areas known for their high levels of antagonism towards ethnic minorities, as in this part of South London

the successful commission of a racial murder requires that there be no witnesses. So between the performativity of the racist insult and the performance of the murderous act there opens up an all too fatal gap, a gap that can only be widened by further acts of intimidation. For what is a performance without an audience?

Yet in this case the gap is filled, not so much by the pantomime of racial violence these boys stage for their own benefit, as by its alteration through police surveillance into a medium of voyeurism for the rest of the world. But as we watch these boys cavorting about, entering through the eye of the hidden lens their 'secret world' of racial phantasy what - or rather whose- game are we really playing?

We could say that it is a game that centres on the phantasy of seeing, hearing and hence knowing everything about the Other, without oneself being seen, heard, or recognised as Other. It is about eaves dropping and peeking through invisible keyholes into worlds from which one is normally excluded. The ideal is to participate secretly, without being observed to be doing so, and to observe without in any way disturbing what is going on. What is to be seen and heard in this way is usually some excitingly illicit, dangerous, or forbidden, but pleasurable scene. In other words, it is about what Freud called the primal scene, the scene staged in the imagination even and especially if it is witnessed 'for real' in which the child observes his parents making love, and which may be interpreted as an act of violence, but at the very least is experienced as something which may be observed *but not told*, on pain of castration or death.

So as watchers of this video we have unwittingly been made to occupy the vantage point of an ideal audience for a racist murder to be public staged, as witnesses who do not have to be silenced 'after the event' because it is always and already after the event and we have nothing to say that may be usefully taken down and used in evidence against these boys; we may be fascinated or repulsed by the spectacle of the crime, but we are powerless to intervene. We can of course press the button and stop the video, but we cannot interrupt this unfolding scenario of racist hatred, we can only replay it and indeed we may well find ourselves caught in the compulsion to repeat.

What we have to face therefore is the fact of a certain structural complicity between the spectacle of racist violence and the standpoint of official antiracist horror. I am not talking here of a certain 'mirroring' between the rhetorical styles of racist/fascist/far right organisations and certain antiracist/anti fascist far left groups, although this certainly exists. I mean that we have to begin our analysis, and our activism, from a recognition that in racism's Other scene, there are no hard and fast lines to be drawn between 'two legs bad' and 'four legs bad'. In this context it will not help to remember Hegel's dictum that in the night

all cows are black. For under the aegis of that legacy we find, when dawn comes, that the Old Mole of History is still burrowing away in the belief that it was ever thus. Psychoanalysis both indicates the role which racism plays in the construction of that nightmare and helps us wake up to what it is we need to do to unearth a less split principle of hope.
