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PSYCHOANALYSIS AND RACE

Kelly Oliver

While the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, discusses civilization and the infant's move into the social, he rarely addresses social problems, particularly oppression and its psychic consequences. Although Freud acknowledges the effect of social conditions on the psyche, he and his followers seldom consider how those social conditions become the conditions of possibility for an individual's psychic life and subject formation. While Freudian psychoanalytic theory has addressed itself to questions of subjectivity and subject formation, traditionally it has done so without considering the subject's social position, or more significantly the impact of that subject position or social conditions on the formation of the psyche.

We need more than an application of psychoanalytic concepts to social institutions or psychic formations in order to explain the effects of oppression and racism on the psyche. To explain why so many people suffer at the core of their subjectivity and its concomitant sense of agency when they are abjected, excluded, or oppressed by mainstream culture, we need a psychoanalytic social theory that reformulates psychoanalytic concepts as social. Psychoanalytic social theory should be based on social concepts of subject formation that consider how the psyche is formed and deformed within particular types of social contexts.

Theories that do not consider subject position, social context, and the role of social conditions in subjectivity and psychic formation not only cover over the differential power relations addressed by some contemporary theorists using psychoanalysis, but they also cover over the differential subjectivities produced within those relations. Without considering subject position, we assume that all subjects are alike and thereby level differences; or like traditional psychoanalysis, we end up developing a normative notion of subject-formation based on a particular group, traditionally white European men.

Freudian Psychoanalysis and Social Conditions

If Freud normalizes a white male European subject, and we risk perpetuating this normalization by using his concepts without transforming them, then why turn to psychoanalytic theory at all to discuss race and the effects of racism on the psyche? Even if we could do away with the prejudice of Freud's nineteenth-century theories and their

twentieth-century versions, psychoanalysis still deals with individuals at odds with the social, so what can we gain from turning psychoanalytic concepts based on individuals into social concepts? How can we balance the social and the psyche in order to develop concepts that articulate their relationality and the link between them?

There are two primary facets of psychoanalysis that make it crucial for social theory in general, and race theory in particular: the centrality of the notion of the unconscious and the importance of sublimation as an alternative to repression. Both of these facets come to bear in important ways on the fact that all of our relationships are mediated by meaning, that we are beings who mean. As beings who mean, our experiences are both bodily and mental. Unconscious drive force or energy operates between soma and psyche. We could say that our being is brought into the realm of meaning through unconscious drive energy and their affective representations.

The psychoanalytic concept most appropriate to a discussion of unconscious drive energy making its way into the realm of meaning is sublimation. Although this notion remains underdeveloped in Freud's writings (Freud supposedly burned his only paper on sublimation, thus subjecting it to literal sublimation by fire), and it has been used without much further development since, it is central to social theory, especially to a social theory of oppression and racism. We need a theory that explains how we articulate or otherwise express our bodies, experiences, and affects, all of which are fluid and energetic, in some form of meaningful signification so that we can communicate with others. Oppression and racism undermine the ability to sublimate by withholding or foreclosing the possibility of articulating and thereby discharging bodily drives and affects. The bodies and affects of those othered have already been excluded as subject from the realm of proper society.

As Frantz Fanon argued, drives are much more fluid than those of traditional psychoanalytic theory. Fanon rejects Freud's notion that sublimation is the result of redirecting sexual drives in particular and his notion that the drives originate within one body. Rather, all forms of signification presuppose the sublimation of drives and their affective representations into the realm of meaning. If it is true, as Freud suggests, that affects are representations of drives, then it is also true that our greatest access to drives should be through the affective realm. In fact, if drives remain unconscious until brought to analysis and subjected to interpretation, it makes sense to focus on affects in order to begin to understand our bodily impulses and experiences.

Drives and affects do not originate in one body or one psyche but rather are relational and transitory—they can move from one body to another. Following Fanon, we could say that the negative affects of the oppressors are “deposited into the bones” of the oppressed ([1961] 1968, 52). Affects move between bodies; colonization and oppression operate through depositing the unwanted affects of the dominant group onto those othered by that group in order to sustain their privileged position. Diagnosing the colonization of psychic space demands a close analysis of the affects of oppression and how those affects are produced within particular social situations.

Sublimation is necessary for beings to enter the realm of meaning. The first acts of meaning are available through the sublimation of bodily impulses into forms of communication. Moreover, sublimation allows us to connect and communicate with others by making our bodies and experiences meaningful; we become beings who mean by sublimating our bodily drives and affects. Sublimation, then, is necessary for both subjectivity or individuality and community or sociality. Sublimation is the lynchpin of a

psychoanalytic social theory, for it is sublimation that makes idealization possible. And without idealization we can neither conceptualize our experience nor set goals or ideals for ourselves; without the ability to idealize, we cannot imagine our situation otherwise, which is to say that without idealization we cannot resist domination. Sublimation and idealization are necessary not only for psychic life but also for transformative and restorative resistance to racist oppression. Sublimation and idealization are the cornerstones of our mental life, yet they have their source in bodies, bodies interacting with each other. It is through the social relationality of bodies that sublimation is possible. But, in an oppressive culture that abjects, excludes, or marginalizes certain groups or types of people by racializing them, sublimation and idealization can become the privilege of dominant groups. The psychoanalytic notions of sublimation and idealization become fundamentally social concepts that are necessary to subjectivity and its concomitant sense of agency.

Fanon and “Negrophobia”

Engaging with notions of sublimation and idealization, Frantz Fanon transforms Freudian psychoanalytic theory by considering the ways in which the colonial situation with its racialization of the colonized leads to pathologies on both sides. Fanon’s diagnosis of colonial obsessions and phobias not only complicates Freud’s focus, which is more often than not on individual traumatic experiences rather than on social institutions, but also interrogates what Freud considered “common” phobic objects, such as animals, for example, horses, chickens, or rats. In contrast, Fanon develops what he calls “Negrophobia,” which is social rather than individual in nature.

In traditional Freudian psychoanalytic theory both obsession and phobia are considered affective disorders insofar as they operate on the affective level. Freud distinguishes obsession from phobia according to their affective operations:

Two constituents are found in every obsession: 1) an idea that forces itself upon the patient; 2) an associated emotional state. Now, in the group of phobias this emotional state is always one of “anxiety,” while in true obsessions other emotional states, such as doubt, remorse, or anger, may occur just as well as anxiety.
([1895] 1962: 74–75)

For Freud, whereas in obsession the extreme affect associated with an original troubling idea—an idea that can have its source in a traumatic experience—moves to a substitute idea, in phobia the anxiety or fear remains attached to the original idea, which can either be what he calls a “common” phobia or an individual one (see 1895, 1894). He says of obsession that

any idea can be made use of which is either able, from its nature, to be united with an affect of the quality in question, or which has certain relations to the incompatible idea which make it seem as though it could serve as a surrogate for it.
(Freud [1894] 1962: 54)

Furthermore, obsessional neurosis is associated with the “internalization of a sado-masochistic relation in the shape of tension between the ego and a particularly cruel

super-ego” (Laplanche and Pontilas 1973: 281). Freud, at least in his early writings, is more interested in obsessions that do not originate in traumatic experience and phobias that are not “common.”

Colonization, however, produces obsessional relations in the colonized through social trauma that is repeated daily on almost all levels of social life. On Fanon’s analysis, the idea that forces itself on the colonized is the idea of his own inferiority and the white man’s superiority. The affects that are associated with these ideas are a complex of anger and shame. The self-reproach typical of obsessional neurosis is the result of the internalization of—or more accurately, the infection with—the particularly cruel super-ego of the colonized, a super-ego that abjects the colonized as racialized others. Fanon suggests that the strong affects engaged by the inferiority complex of colonization become associated with gaining the recognition and love of the colonizer. Anger directed towards the colonizer turns inward and becomes anger and shame directed towards the self, which in turn flips over into the desire for recognition and love from those very same people who have rejected the colonized as barbaric in the first place. In this regard, the need for recognition from the colonizer is a symptom of the pathology of colonization (Oliver 2001). The colonizer’s violent and cruel super-ego is forced onto the colonized to produce an inferiority complex, which in turn leads to the obsessive need for recognition from the “superior” white colonizer. The colonized’s anger at the violence and degradation leveled against him by the colonizer is transferred to the idea of his own inferiority. The colonized suffer from an obsession with gaining love and recognition from their harsh dominators.

Insofar as the super-ego of racist imperialist ideology takes over culture, the phobia or fear of racialized others becomes what Freud calls a common phobia, a phobia accepted by dominant society. Fanon insists on investigating for whom the black body, especially the body of the black man, is a phobic object and why. Within the colonial ideology, the black body is abjected, which affects not only the treatment of black “natives” by white colonizers but also the psyche of the colonized who are forced to negotiate their own abjection within the dominant culture. The phobia is “common” and is a socially prescribed phobia.

Phobia and Abjection

Here, Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection may be more useful than Freud’s theory of phobia precisely because it emphasizes the social aspects of phobia, particularly what Freud calls common phobias. With her theory of the abject and abjection, Kristeva develops Klein’s thesis that ambivalence is a defense against ambiguity. Kristeva defines a notion of abjection with which she diagnoses separation and identification in both individuals and nations or societies. She suggests that the abject is not, as we might ordinarily think, what is grotesque or unclean; rather it is what calls into question borders and threatens identity. The abject is on the borderline, and as such it is both fascinating and terrifying.

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva says “to each ego its object to each super-ego its abject” ([1980] 1982: 2). For Kristeva, the abject is not yet an object but rather that which calls into question boundaries. The abject is the in-between that challenges all categorization. She maintains that on the social level the abject and abjection are ways of negotiating our relationship to, or separation from, other animals and animality; while

on the personal individual level abjection is a way of negotiating separation from the maternal body (Kristeva [1980] 1982: 4). Phobias always take us back to the abject with its questionable borders. In other words, it is ambiguity itself that is the phobic “not-yet-object.” Phobia is a type of defense against this ambiguity. What we exclude as abject recalls our own ambiguous borders in relation to animality and maternal origins. Phobia, then, is the result of the subject’s own fear and aggressivity that come back to him from outside: “I am not the one that devours, I am being devoured by him” (Kristeva [1980] 1982: 39). This is precisely what Fanon describes when he discusses what he calls the white man’s “Negrophobia.”

Although Fanon’s analysis of “Negrophobia” is provocative (for example when he suggests that negrophobic white women fantasize about being raped by black men in what turns out to be their desire for sexual fulfillment), it points to the threat of ambiguity associated with the abject. Fanon proposes that Negrophobia is the affect at the root of the white man’s world ([1952] 1967: 155); and all evil and malefic powers are associated with the abjected black body. This abjected black body determines white man’s bodily schema (Fanon [1952] 1967: 160). In this sense, the white man’s sense of himself as good and civilized is defined against the black body, which he abjects as evil and animal. This abjection follows the logic of shoring up borders as a defense against ambiguity. Fanon’s text suggests that there is a fear of ambiguous borders—borders of animality and racial borders—behind Negrophobia, which is primarily a fear of the black man’s imagined sexual powers. He says, parodying phobic stereotypes of Negro animality and miscegenation,

As for the Negroes, they have tremendous sexual powers. What do you expect, with all the freedom they have in their jungles! They copulate at all times and in all places. They are really genital. They have so many children that they cannot even count them. Be careful, or they will flood us with little mulattoes.
(Fanon [1952] 1967: 157)

This passage suggests that the real fear is not of the black body or of the animal, but rather of the breakdown of borders between civilized and barbaric, human and animal, white and black.

Fanon describes the white man’s phobia as the correlate, even cause, of the black man’s obsession and inferiority complex. He also diagnoses a “sensitizing” and “collapse of the ego” as a result of the interiorization of the white man’s phobia that leads to the black man’s obsession with gaining recognition from his oppressors (Fanon [1952] 1967: 154). Moving away from Freud, he insists that the neurosis of the colonized is the result of the cultural or social situation rather than individual psychology (Fanon [1952] 1967: 152). Phobia and obsession make up the pathology of the colonial situation rather than a few neurotic individuals.

Colonization attempts to force the colonized to take on the white man’s anxiety over his uncertain and ambiguous borders (both physical and psychological). This anxiety is manifest in the white man’s phobia, which acts as a defense against unwanted affects that are projected onto racialized others. The success of the colonization of psychic space can be measured by the extent to which the colonized internalize—or should we say become infected by—the cruel super-ego that abjects them and substitutes anger against their oppressors with an obsessive need to gain their approval. In other words,

the colonization of psychic space is dependent upon the colonized internalizing the inferiority/superiority dichotomy that sustains the colonizer's self-identity. This logic is full of self-contradictions that insure its failure. Indeed, the logic of colonization is paradoxical because it requires the colonized to internalize the lack of an interior, soul, or mind (Oliver 2001).

Lacan and Race Theory

Literary critics Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks and Juliet Flower MacCannell in different ways address the relationship between race, affect, and colonization, using the vocabulary of Lacanian theory, through which we can extend our analysis of the colonization of psychic space. Following Fanon, both theorists describe the racialization of colonization as the result of phobia and a cruel superego. Seshadri-Crooks argues that “the paradox is that Whiteness attempts to signify the unsignifiable, i.e. humanness, in order to preserve our subjective investment in race” (2000: 45). Following this Lacanian train of thought, we could say that whiteness attempts to signify the unsignifiable intersection of being and meaning in human beings. For Lacan there is always a fundamental split between being and meaning. How can we signify our being as beings who mean? On Lacan's analysis either we signify and—to use Sartre's phrase—make ourselves a lack of being, or we simply are (being) in which case we do not mean. As Seshadri-Crooks explains, “Whiteness is merely a signifier that masquerades as being and thereby blocks access to lack” (2000: 45). On Seshadri-Crooks's analysis, whiteness operates as a transcendental signifier, itself outside of the realm of signification. Whiteness poses as Nature or Being, or more precisely as the Essence of Human Being. The paradox is that whiteness both signifies Nature or Being (the lack of lack), and the lack of being that makes meaning—that is to say human existence—possible. As Seshadri-Crooks describes it, this encounter with the lack of lack or Being produces anxiety in the raced subject and this anxiety in turn produces a phobic object, namely the surface of the body, the skin and other surface traits (2000: 45–46). On her analysis, all of us are raced subjects trying to live up to the impossible ideal of whiteness. Within the colonial logic, whiteness becomes an ethical good that is impossible to attain; and the phobic object must be excluded in order to sustain the good or clean and proper body image (Seshadri-Crooks 2000: 37).

For Juliet Flower MacCannell, like Seshadri-Crooks, whiteness is related to the Real beyond signification (2000). But, whereas for Seshadri-Crooks, whiteness or race is not in the Real but poses as Nature as a defense against the anxiety of confronting the contingency, even arbitrariness, of our own nature, for Flower MacCannell race is the result of the White Man's Real, which infects the colonized. Like Fanon, Flower MacCannell is concerned to diagnose how it is that colonization affects the psyches as well as the material conditions of those colonized.

Reading *Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks*, Flower MacCannell maintains that colonization is effective because it infects the colonized with she calls the “White Man's Thing”:

the colonized body is one that has been exposed or invaded by drives other than its own. The colonization of the subject arrives through the White Man's Thing. The signifier that had granted one person his humanity is displaced by a

dehumanizing Thing not his own. The signifier *white* carried its own traumatic Thing in its wake and invaded the colonized with it.

(2000: 65)

Flower MacCannell argues that the dehumanization of colonization takes place through a kind of advertising campaign of sorts that infects the colonized with the White Man's desire ultimately fueled by the death drive, a death drive that does not properly belong to the colonized. Resonant with our analysis so far, Flower MacCannell maintains that the colonized are infected with the colonizer's sadistic superego, a superego that protects its own humanity by dehumanizing the other as foreclosed phobic "object."

Flower MacCannell says, "the proper name of the White Man's Thing is 'the Good'" (2000: 66). The White Man's fantasy of the Good displaces the colonized's own fantasies; and the White Man's unconscious invades the unconscious of the colonized. Colonization is not just an invasion of physical space but also an invasion of psychic space. The ideology of colonization centers on the notion that the civilizing mission is driven by an ethical imperative to bring the Good to the "barbarians." As Flower MacCannell describes this operation, it turns on the contradictory function of the Good in the psyche of the White Man. The White Man is caught between the social pressure to sacrifice pleasure for the common good and the perverse demand of the superego to enjoy without regard for others. She argues, "colonialism provided the perfect outlet for both the guilt of enjoyment and the imperative to enjoy the colonizer's own superego imposed" (2000: 72). The bad good—enjoyment, bodily pleasure, affect—is projected onto the colonized who are seen to laugh and dance without regard for the common good, while the Good—civilized restraint over pleasure and affect—is reserved for the White Man.

Resonant with Seshadri-Crooks's notion that the surface of the body is the most immediate place where the anxiety produced by the transcendental signifier whiteness attaches its phobia, Flower MacCannell claims that "race was the weak point or lesion where the alien's Good was inserted" (2000: 73). Because the body seems to inhabit the realm of Nature or the Real, it is supremely susceptible to a Good that divides the world into Nature versus Culture, Barbaric versus Civilized, Animal versus Human. Within the logic of this civilized Good, the body always falls to the other side. And insofar as this Good must insist that it is Universal, all differences, including different notions of good, become nothing more than justification for the civilizing mission and evidence of the need for colonization; all other goods become lesser goods in need of the lesson of the Universal Good. Nothing short of an alternative Universal Good can compete; anything "less" is at a disadvantage when faced with the White Man's claim to *The Truth* and *The Good*. The construction and maintenance of this Universal Good is further complicated by the operations of the Western civilizing mission to cover over its abjection and exclusion of the black body as bad or evil. As Lewis Gordon points out,

Fanon realized that the more he asserted his membership in Western civilization the more he was pathologized, for the system's affirmation depends on its denial of ever having illegitimately excluded him; he is, as in theodicy, a reminder of injustice in a system that is supposed to have been wholly good.

(2000: 4)

Fanon demonstrates that the effectiveness of colonization and its inherent racism are not merely epistemological but also psychological. Taking her lead from Fanon, Flower MacCannell argues that the psychic consequence of colonialism is that the White Man's desire becomes the only desire; it displaces the colonized's own desires and takes root as a perverse desire for the White Man's Thing. This desire is not only the desire for the White Man's goods (material goods and moral Goods) but also for the Thing that lies behind them.

The colonized, then, are "infected" with the cruel superego that sets up an impossible desire by both demanding and prohibiting it at the same time. Whereas this perverse superego constructs and protects the White Man's subjectivity and defines the place of his ego, Fanon maintains that in the colonized it becomes a mass attack against the ego ([1961] 1968: 252; [1952] 1967: 143). As Fanon points out, the effects on the colonized are the opposite of the effects on the colonizer. Most simply this is because while the perverse operations of the cruel super-ego make the White Man, they can never make the black man over (fully) into the White Man. The black man is denied both the desired (eroticized phobic) object—The Good and/or the white maternal breast (good and bad)—as well as the place of the subject, the White Man.

The pathology of colonialism takes place on the level of deepest desire and affect, the very construction of the psyche with its unconscious and conscious desires. The colonizer infects the colonies with his perverse and paradoxical desires and affects, which attach to the surface of the bodies of the colonized, in whom they often appear as somatic and psychic symptoms or what, as we have seen, Fanon calls "the emotional sensitivity" that is "kept on the surface of the skin like an open sore" ([1952] 1967: 52).

Given this analysis of the colonization of psychic space and the transmission of affect, Fanon's insistence on the healing power of violence in his later works can be seen in a new light. Fanon prescribes violent resistance to colonialism not just in order to regain territory and physical freedoms but also in order to regain a sense of agency, which is undermined through the colonization of psychic space. As Fanon says in *The Wretched of the Earth*,

From the moment that you and your like are liquidated like so many dogs, you have no other resource but to use all and every means to regain your importance as a man. You must therefore weigh as heavily as you can upon the body of your torturer in order that his soul, lost in some byway, may finally find once more its universal dimension.

([1961] 1968: 295)

(Note too that Fanon insists that you must pressure the body to get to the soul.) Violent resistance restores the sense of agency or action lost through racist oppression. Fanon says, "At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" ([1961] 1968: 94, cf. 293; cf. 1964 [1994], 121). For Fanon, violence plays an important function for nation building and collective history; collective violence creates a sense of collectivity and collective history and restores the sense of agency that is undermined by colonialism. If the colonizer attempts to render the colonized a subhuman object incapable of rational thought and subjective agency, then active resistance serves to restore a sense of agency to the oppressed. For Fanon,

violence is one effective means (along with love and understanding) to address what he calls the “mass attack against the ego” leveled against the colonized by the colonialism (1961 [1968], 252).

In addition, we can imagine that violence is necessary to redirect the colonizer’s affects—particularly anger—back where they belong. Violence directed inward by colonialism is now redirected outward. Fanon suggests that the colonizer “deposits” anger into the “bones” of the colonized. This anger becomes directed inward and leads to colonized violence against themselves. The struggle against colonialism must include a struggle to free psychic space from this domination by the cruel superego of the colonizer (see Zahar 1974). If the White Man’s anger has been deposited in the bones of the colonized, then that anger must be excised; it must be redirected outward. If colonial affects are deposited in the bodies of the colonized at the same time that colonial prohibitions against affect infect them, then those affects must be sent back to their proper place.

Sketching the Terrain of Psychoanalytic Race Theory

Fanon’s use of psychoanalysis has been central to contemporary race theorists who employ psychoanalytic theory. Following Fanon, there are three approaches to psychoanalysis and race: taking psychoanalytic concepts and applying them to race; using analysis of race to challenge psychoanalytic concepts; and transforming psychoanalytic concepts through an engagement with race. Most critical race theorists who turn to psychoanalysis employ various combinations of all three. For example, most of the essays in Christopher Lane’s collection *The Psychoanalysis of Race* are good examples of insightful applications of psychoanalytic concepts (1998). They take psychoanalytic concepts like melancholy, desire, or abjection, and extrapolate from the individual to social and political institutions. They use psychoanalytic concepts to diagnose particular social situations, cultural productions, or the psychic formations of group identities. Some theorists, however, like many mentioned here, not only apply psychoanalysis to oppression and racism, but also transform psychoanalytic concepts (alienation, misrecognition, paranoia, identification, unconscious, ambivalence, melancholy, among others) into social concepts by developing a psychoanalytic theory based on a notion of the psyche that is thoroughly social.

Insofar as the psyche does not exist apart from social relationships and cultural influences, psychoanalytic theory must take into account social circumstances. And, vice versa, if there are always unconscious dynamics that affect our investments in, and reactions to, social phenomena, then social theory must engage psychoanalysis. If the psyche is thoroughly social, we need a social psychoanalytic theory not only to diagnose social phenomena, but also to explain individual and group subject formation. We cannot explain the development of individual or group identity apart from its social context. But neither can we formulate a social theory that can explain the dynamics of oppression and racism without considering the psychic dimension. We need a theory that operates between the psyche and the social. In order to analyze racial identity and racist prejudice, we need a psychoanalytic social theory through which the very terms of psychoanalysis are transformed into social concepts (cf. Oliver 2004).

Perhaps inspired by Judith Butler’s use of Freud’s theory of melancholy to explain heterosexual desire as the foreclosure of homosexual desire, many race theorists have

used melancholy to describe the ambivalence of racial identification. For example, in *The Melancholy of Race*, Anne Anlin Cheng uses Freud's theory of melancholy to diagnose Asian Americans' relation to American culture by interpreting and applying the concept of melancholy to various literary and artistic productions (2000). She argues the racism not only leads to a sense of loss and grief for its victims, but also loss and grief are formative of racial identities. The dynamic of loss and compensation described by Freud as melancholy becomes pivotal for thinking about racial identification. Similarly, David Eng and Shinhee Han combine Freud's theory of melancholia with Klein's theory of good and bad objects in order to diagnose the depressive position of Asian Americans within American culture; they argue, "processes of immigration, assimilation, and racialization are neither pathological or permanent, but involve the fluid negotiation between mourning and melancholia" (2000). Like Cheng, Eng and Han argue that racial identification is melancholic. These theorists use the Freudian notion of melancholy to discuss the elements of fantasy in dominant discourses about immigration, citizenship, and disease and health, among others.

Some theorists such as Mikko Tukhanen, Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, Rey Chow, and Homi Bhabha turn from Freud to Jacques Lacan to analyze race and racism. For example, Homi Bhabha uses Lacanian concepts of mimicry and ambivalence to analyze race and desire (cf. Lacan 1977). He develops notions of hybridity, ambivalence, and stereotype, all of which have as their basis the psychoanalytic notion of the ambivalence and fluidity of desire combined with the fantastic aspect of identity. In other words, our desires are always ambivalent and our identities are always, at least in part, fantasies. Race and racism, then, are the products of ambivalent desires and fantastic identities rather than fixed, transcendent, or natural (1994). For Bhabha, the "double vision" or ambivalence of all desire and identity opens up the possibility of resistance to domination: "*double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (1994: 126). Psychoanalysis is central to Bhabha's analysis of the fluidity and ambivalence of both identity and desire.

Following Bhabha, Tukhanen uses Lacan's theory of mimicry in the mirror stage, and the misrecognition and paranoid identification essential to it, to investigate the ambivalence inherent in redeploying racial stereotypes in emancipatory ways. Examining reactions to the history of both white and black Blackface, Tukhanen argues that Lacanian psychoanalysis can help us make sense of the seemingly contradictory ways in which Blackface both perpetuated racist stereotypes and challenged them through parody (2010). Like Bhabha, Tukhanen finds psychoanalysis useful in diagnosing what otherwise might seem like simple contradictions rather than ambivalence inherent in psychic connections to both identity and desire (2010).

Seshadri-Crooks also analyzes racialized images in popular culture and film using Lacanian psychoanalysis. She brilliantly argues that whiteness operates like the Lacanian phallus as an ideal against which we all fall short (2000). Substituting the concept of whiteness for the Lacanian phallus, she extends these transformed Lacanian concepts to literature and film. She shows how the concept of race is tied to a notion of whiteness such that all human beings are divided into groups in relationship to the category of whiteness. She thereby shows how race continues to affect every facet of our lives even while it operates through a fantasy of transcendental whiteness.

Like Seshadri-Crooks and others, Rey Chow provocatively uses Lacanian concepts to analyze various kinds of cultural productions including film and literature. She argues that psychoanalysis is necessary to understand the motivations for identity politics. In other words, she insists that we must diagnose the psychic dimensions of identity formation, which are effaced in many discussions of identity politics. Relying on Lacanian notions of misrecognition, the real, and trauma, Chow diagnoses the double consciousness of post-colonial and racialized experience (e.g., 1998: 2014).

For all of these theorists, Freud's notion of the unconscious, especially as it entails ambivalence and melancholy, along with Lacan's elaborations of these notions, especially the notion of misrecognition in the mirror stage, play a central role in analyzing race and racism. Psychoanalysis provides a theoretical framework for diagnosing ambivalence inherent in both identity and desire. The psychoanalytic subject is always a fluid subject whose identities and desires are thoroughly permeated by fantasy and ambivalence. Thus, psychoanalytic theory complicates simple notions of black and white or oppressed and oppressor and helps to explain why and how race and racialization affect everyone. Finally, psychoanalysis demands that we endlessly investigate and question our own unconscious desires as they affect our beliefs and actions. Psychoanalysis, then, has profound ethical implications. Although, insofar as they remain unconscious, we never completely know our desires, they always affect us. Our unconscious desires and phobias govern, if not determine, our beliefs and actions. Thus, the ethics of psychoanalysis demands that we explore our own unconscious desires and phobias, and our own investments in violence, in order to vigilantly and continuously attempt to bring the unconscious motives of our actions to consciousness. Not to do so is to risk repeating racism rather than understanding and overcoming it.

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