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# A critical psychology of the postcolonial

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*ABSTRACT. Of the theoretical resources typically taken as the underlying foundations of critical social psychology, elements, typically, each of Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and Post-Structuralism, one particular mode of critique remains notably absent: postcolonial theory. What might be the most crucial contributions that postcolonial critique can make to the project of critical psychology? One answer is that of a reciprocal forms of critique, the retrieval of a 'psychopolitics' in which we not only place the psychological within the register of the political, but - perhaps more challengingly - in which the political is also, strategically, approached through the register of the psychological. What the writings of Fanon and Biko make plain in this connection is the degree to which the narratives and concepts of the social psychological may be reformulated so as to fashion a novel discourse of resistance, one that opens up new avenues for critique for critical psychology, on one hand, and that affords an innovative set of opportunities for the psychological investigation of the vicissitudes of the postcolonial, on the other.*

**Keywords:** postcolonial, psychopolitics, critical psychology, political, Fanon, Biko, Bhabha, psychoanalysis, resistance, racism

*The most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed*  
Steve Biko.

Of the theoretical resources typically taken as the underlying foundations of critical social psychology, elements, typically, each of Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and, perhaps chiefly, the 'turn to text' characteristic of Post-Structuralism (Gough & McFadden, 2001; Hepburn, 2003; Parker, 1999, 2002; Walkerdine, 2002), one particular mode of critique remains notably absent, that of postcolonial theory. What makes this omission so conspicuous is that much postcolonial theory is explicitly psychological in both its concerns and its critical resources. Fanon's (1986) *Black Skin White Masks*, for example, makes ample reference to various psychological and psychoanalytic formulations as way of accentuating what one might term the 'identity trauma' of blackness in colonial contexts, and as way of articulating the depth and tenacity of the psychical components of racism (Bulhan, 1985). Homi Bhabha (1983) likewise cross-references a series of psychoanalytic notions – chiefly that of the fetish, but also the condensation and displacement of the dreamwork, and the narcissistic aggressivity of the mirror-stage ego-formation – in his reformulation of that classic social psychological notion of the stereotype. While the conceptual framework of psychoanalysis is absent in the writings of Steve Biko (1978), his political objectives are powerfully, even if strategically psychological in nature. It is by drawing upon the terms of this discourse of self, identity, subjectivity that certain of the key features of the Black Consciousness Movement come to light. In many ways Black Consciousness takes as its goal exactly the consolidation of positive and politicized

forms of black culture and identity, certainly inasmuch as they play their role in generating political solidarity amongst the oppressed.

Each of these above sets of critical formulations provide powerful ways of thinking the conjunction of the psychological and the political, the affective and the structural, the psychical and the governmental. We have as such a powerfully critical combination of registers that one would take to lie at the centre of critical psychology's ostensibly critical concerns (Hayes, 1989; Hook, 2004a). Why then have such post- or anti-colonial thinkers not featured more strongly in the conceptual resources of critical social psychology? How might their work, and their characteristic concerns – racism, colonial discourse, cultural dispossession, alterity, psychical mutilation, resistance, etc. – alert us to gaps in the growing orthodoxy of critical psychology? To approach the question from another direction: what might be said to be the 'critical psychology' of these theorists, and particularly of Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko? How might their use of the register of the psychological *within the political* and their concerns with the cultural dynamics of colonisation alert us to the possibilities of psychology as a vocabulary of resistance? Furthermore, what does each of these critics have to tell us about the crowning problematic of the colonial and postcolonial condition, namely that of racism, a phenomena that seems as political as it does psychical in nature? Before turning to a brief discussion of the work of each of the above theorists it will be necessary to underline what I mean when I refer both to 'critical social psychology' and 'postcolonial criticism'.

### **Critical social psychology and political critique**

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

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

examination of how dominant accounts of psychology operate ideologically, and in the services of power. Importantly though, this ‘heterogeneous process of critique’ should ideally spread to forms of social action (Goodley & Parker, 2000). A tension again seems apparent here between intellectual undertakings against psychology, and the broader sphere of political activism, as I have noted elsewhere (Hook, 2001).

If we are to assess critical psychology in terms of the above definitions, we may well arrive at the conclusion that its agendas of political activity remain of a particularly limited sort, particularly in so far as they remain focussed on the critique of psychology itself. Work falling under the rubric of ‘critical psychology’ may of course exceed the above definitions, and hence we would be at fault to making sweeping claims regards the shortcomings of critical psychology as a whole. Nevertheless, the question poses itself as to whether it might not be worthwhile offering a slightly different description of, or focus for, critical psychology than those given above. May we not, by contrast, suggest that critical psychology should constitute an investigation of the relation between power and psychology, that it should be concerned both with the critique of oppressive use of psychology *and* with enabling potentially transformative forms of practice (from within psychology, or from without) which disrupt imbalances of power and which have social equality as their goal (Hook, 2004a)?

To be clear then, the critique that I will go on to offer does not take critical psychology as a whole as a target, rather it focuses on a set of depoliticizing tendencies within critical psychology best outlined by Hayes (2001). Critical psychology, he argues, needs reconsider what it means to be *critical*, that it need focus on what prospective critical historical antecedents it might best align itself so as to overcome this gap between intellectual and political activity, between insular critical engagements with psychology itself, and the broader realm of social action. This search for strategic theoretical forms, he claims, needs be lead by a suspicion of the neutralizing trappings neo-liberalism (Hayes, 2001). In his words:

[C]ritical psychology needs to engage with and develop concepts that have the potential to transcend merely abstract...analysis, and point the way to practical...political engagement... [C]ritical psychology would be...incomplete if it did not try to take on the injustices and inequalities of the world that we find ourselves in. (2001, p. 47)

## **Postcolonial criticism**

Having identified an area of concern within the general domain of critical psychology, we should now turn our attention to introducing the ‘postcolonial’. In this connection, we may turn to Homi Bhabha who provides an adroit summary of both the concerns and the scope of postcolonial criticism. (Although I will not discuss Bhabha’s work in any detail here, he usefully enables us to frame the discussion of the writings of Fanon and Biko, and to emphasize at certain points, trenchant points of my overall argument). Postcolonial criticism, he writes ‘bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world’ (1994, p. 171).

Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of ‘minorities’ within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South...[Their aim is to] intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic ‘normality’ to the uneven development and

the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples. They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the 'rationalizations' of modernity...the postcolonial project, at the most general theoretical level, seeks to explore those social pathologies 'loss of meaning, conditions of anomie' – that no longer simply 'cluster around class antagonism, [but] break up into widely scattered historical contingencies'. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 171)

Bhabha adds two further vital points to this commentary. Firstly: 'it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement – that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking...' (1994, p. 172). Furthermore:

[T]he affective experience of social marginality – as it emerges in non-canonical cultural forms - transforms of critical strategies. It forces us to...engage with culture as an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 172)

With these points in mind - the revitalization of critique by those who have suffered the subjugation of colonialism, and culture as a tactic of 'social survival' - we turn our attentions to Frantz Fanon and to those aspects of his more psychological writings that hold the greatest rejuvenating potential for critical psychology.

### **Fanon, 'psychopolitics'**

One way of grasping the importance of the inaugural moment of Fanon's critique in *Black Skin, White Masks* is by understanding that what Fanon was doing was to formulate a kind of critique where, to a very large extent, one did not properly exist, and where no pre-existing forms would do.<sup>2</sup> If there is a fact that Fanon's most vital writings impress upon us, it is that the violence of the colonial encounter is absolutely unprecedented, that the colonial moment of epistemic, cultural, psychic and physical violence makes for a unique kind of historical trauma. Bhabha (1987) puts this well when he suggests that the force of Fanon's vision comes from the tradition of the oppressed, the language of revolutionary awareness, adding, furthermore, that 'there is no master narrative or realist perspective that provides a background of social and historical facts against which emerge the problems of the individual or collective psyche [in the colonial encounter]' (1986, p. ii). Bhabha here is expanding on Fanon, who himself is drawing on Mannoni (1990) – although in changed form: despite what Fanon gains from him, Mannoni is an early target of *Black Skin, White Masks* - who initially made the suggestion that the colonial world seems not only pathological, but *pathogenic* by the severity of the relations of domination that it incurred, by its function as a surface of fantasy, ambivalence, hatred and desire. The argument as such is that something like a psychological, and indeed *psychoanalytic* register, is indispensable both in properly formulating these violence – grasping them conceptually, analytically - and as a rudimentary basis for their critique. Fanon opens *Black Skin, White Masks* by insisting on the necessity of a psychoanalytic account of racism and colonial violence, even if such a conceptualization need ultimately take its

place alongside, and in conjunction with, analyses of the socio-political and economic factors.

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

All of Fanon's work falls into that category where the sciences of personality and the sciences of society converge...[in an attempt] to traverse the distance between an analysis of the consciousness of the individual and the analysis of social institutions. (1983, pp. 206-207)

Labeau (1998) has recently discussed Fanon's work in view of the notion of a 'psychopolitics' which I understand, building on McCulloch's conceptualization, as a kind of to and fro movement of registers, of the political into the psychological, and, just as importantly, of the psychological into the political. (Or, as frequently in Fanon, the 'to and fro' of questions of racialized power and how they might be psychoanalytically formulated). In this vein we might think the project of psychopolitics as the critical movement between the socio-political and the psychological, each of which becomes a means of critiquing the other. We have then an explicit means of the politicization of the psychological. This idea provides us with a useful frame to think the 'critical psychology' of Fanon, Biko and Bhabha. Indeed, such a politicization can take at least three related forms. It may refer to the critical process whereby we place a series of ostensibly psychological concerns and concepts within the register of the political and thereby show up the extent to which human psychology is intimately linked to, and in some ways conditioned or limited by, the socio-political and historical forces of its situation. Fanon's work is certainly emblematic of this trend; his refutation of Mannoni's orthodox psychoanalytic interpretation of the dreams of colonized Malagasy subjects is a case in point. (In one particularly memorable instance he remarks 'The rifle [in the dream of a Malagasy man] is not a penis but a genuine rifle, model Lebel 1916' (1986, p. 106)).

Likewise, such a politicization may refer to the critical process whereby psychological concepts, explanations and even modes of experience are employed to describe and illustrate the workings of power. Fanon's work again makes for a benchmark here, although Bhabha's work perhaps extends this mandate, intent as it is on detailing, with reference to a psychoanalytic vocabulary, something like the vicissitudes of colonial power and its resistances. The critical hope here is that by being able to analyze the political in such a psychological way, one might be able to think strategically about how best to intervene within the life of power. Extending this idea, (thirdly) one might suggest that we can put certain forms of psychology to actual political work, that we can use both the concepts and understandings of psychology, *and* the actual terms of psychological experience, *as a means of consolidating resistances to power*. This, in many ways, is Biko's (1978) strategy: the conditional use of certain psychological concepts as a basis for solidarity and resistance to power.

Returning our focus to Fanon: by examining the debilitating personality and identity effects of trying to understand oneself, as a black subject within the system of values of white or European culture – the phenomena of a 'white mask psychology' such as socially-induced 'inferiority complexes', practices of 'lactification', the

neurotic compulsion to be white, etc. - Fanon shows how that what might otherwise be understood within a purely psychological framework is far better explained in political terms, that is, with reference to understandings of racialized power, colonial violence and cultural subordination. In this respect one witnesses in Fanon an astonishing blend of theoretical figures, a kind of lateral movement across psychoanalytic, Marxist, existential, psychiatric and literary modes of conceptualization, all put to use as means of expressing, with difficulty and formidable theoretical complexity, something of the identity-violence of colonial dispossession. The key problematic that Fanon is concerned with here – echoing in many ways the notion of ‘double consciousness’ as articulated in both earlier and later theorists of racism (I mean here Du Bois (1989) and Gilroy (1994) respectively) - is that of being the subject of cultural oppression/racism in which one is incessantly fed with cultural values and understandings which are hostile, devaluating of myself and my culture.

The colonized subject (or, in Fanon’s terms, the native) hence exists in what Sartre (1990) referred to in the preface to Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* as the state of a ‘nervous condition’, an anxious and agitated state (speaking both politically and psychologically) in which one possess little or no cultural resources of one’s own, because they have been eradicated by the cultural imperialism of the colonizer. Fanon’s attempt is to impart to his readers a sense of what this might mean, an awareness not only of the affects of the continual dissonance, within the colonized subject, between ego and culture, self and society, but also the inevitability of coming to think and act subjectively as *white*, of experiencing oneself as a ‘phobic object’, and thus of hate coming both from without and from within, as Lebeau (1998) puts it. This is a lesson very much at the basis of postcolonial critique, a continual awareness of the dislocation between the ideals, the norms of the valorised Western culture, and those of the dominated culture, which comes to be the demoted *other* of all of these values. This constant and recurring slippage is properly pathogenic for Fanon, at least in the sense that it causes a deeply-rooted sense of inferiority, a constantly problematized sense of identity which is split and at war with itself, causing ‘pathologies of liberty’ as Fanon (1990) calls them. <sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the key passage of Fanon’s ‘psychopolitics’ is the famous encounter with the white child on a train that ‘materializes’ psychological objectification into a far more corporeal kind of violence. The racial objectification Fanon suffers at the hands of the white child (“‘Look, a Negro!’...‘Mama, see the Negro! I’m frightened!’ Frightened! Frightened!” (1986, p. 112)), is that of a crushing objecthood beneath the white gaze which dissipates his subjectivity, along with his ability to represent himself. Fanon describes it as an ‘amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that splatter[s] my body with black blood’ (1986, p. 112). This metaphoric conversion of psychic assault into the terms of bodily brutality makes apparent the violence - indeed the trauma - of seemingly minor (and non-physical) incidents of colonial racism. More to the point perhaps, it speaks of a materialist psychology, by which I mean to suggest that it unconventionally links the domain of psychological action to a world of concrete and material effects. This is a point of some importance, so I should be as clear as possible: this materialist psychology appears to disobey the disciplinary injunction to focus on the sphere of pure psychology alone. In so doing, it calls attention to how purist forms of psychology abstract pressing political contexts out of consideration or analysis. Material, institutional and indeed physical relations of force that in fact condition and underwrite psychological existence in colonial environments are often as a result ruled out of analytic contention. <sup>4</sup>

A similar example of how certain psychological effects are put into a relation with the material world, of how the psychic mutilations of colonialism cannot simply be 'psychologized away', or made reducible to an 'apolitical' frame of analysis, comes from Aimé Césaire (1972) who speaks of colonialism in the following terms: 'I am talking of millions of men who have been skilfully infected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, debasement' (cited in Fanon, 1986, p. 14). Fanon's linking of psychology and politics is at its most forceful here, in his understanding of colonialism as not only a means of appropriating land and territory, but of appropriating culture and history themselves, that is, as a way of appropriating the means and resources of identity, and hence affecting powerful forms psychic distress and damage. The colonization of a land, its people, its culture, is also, in short, is a 'colonizing of the mind', in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1986) famous phrase. In similar terms, Bulhan (1979, 1985) argues, rearticulating Fanon: 'the uprooting of psyches from their culture to their insertion into another, in which the basic values [are] prowhite and antiblack, elicit[s] a victimization difficult to quantify, but very massive' (Bulhan, 1985, p. 189).

### **The psychological analysis of racism**

Not only does Fanon bring politics into psychology, he also, manages the reverse, of bringing psychology into politics. He does this by analyzing racism through a series of psychoanalytic conceptualizations that usefully dramatize the logic and workings of colonial power. We find reference in *Black Skin, White Masks* to a succession of psychoanalytic theorists, Freud, Jung, Adler, Lacan, Mannoni are each utilized, even if certain of these (Jung and Mannoni) are reviled in the process. A rich psychoanalytic vocabulary of concepts emerges: the 'neurosis of blackness' or dream of turning white ('What does the black man want?...The black man wants to be white' (1986, pp. 8-9)), the racial imago, the mirror-stage as drama of racial difference, the idea of a 'European collective unconscious', the conceptualization of the Negro as phobogenic object, whiteness as 'metaphysics of positivity', not to mention the mechanisms of projection, ambivalence and scapegoating, each viewed as component procedures of racist ideation. The objectives of this psychological conceptualization is to subject the 'vicissitudes of racism' to critique, to investigate their procedures, in the hope that one might interrupt its functioning. One might view this as Fanon's analysis of the psychic life of the colonial encounter. Because of limitations of space I will not discuss this vital element of Fanon's work in more detail here, although I have done so elsewhere (Hook, 2004b) (see also McCulloch 1983; Gibson, 2003).

Fanon also considers how we might explore psychological concepts as conceptual instruments of a progressive politics. Indeed, Fanon had intended *Black Skin, White Masks* to serve as a kind of 'instrument of liberation' (Macey, 2000); the original intended title of the book was 'Essay for the dis-alienation of the black man' (Julien, 1995). Many of the book's chief ideas - the sociogenetic approach to psychopathology, the conviction of madness as organically linked to the situation of repression, as just two examples - are orientated exactly toward making change possible. As psychoanalysis hopes to free the neurotic from his or her personal neurosis, so this text was intended, as Adams (1970) emphasizes, to offer the reader a means of *alleviating forms of racial neurosis*. Here of course one should not neglect the practical elements of Fanon's own clinical practice, his attempts at transforming

conditions of psychiatric internment (well detailed by Bulhan, 1980a, 1999; Cauter, 1970; McCulloch, 1983). The psychological dimension of political existence must as such be addressed, it must take its place alongside economic and social, indeed *revolutionary* struggles, and must do so as a matter of urgency (Bulhan, 1985). Before one can create the conditions for solidarity among the oppressed, intimates Fanon (1968) – anticipating the standpoint of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness to follow – there must first be the destruction of the subjective aspect of black oppression.

This is the particular complexity of Fanon's psychopolitics: an awareness that psychology does feature in politics, and that we cannot reduce psychology away – reified and ideologically-skewed as many of its primary concepts may well be – or allow it to fall out of the conceptual vocabulary of critical psychology. Those forms of critical psychology content to critique the discourse and functioning of psychology from afar, abstaining themselves from the psychological, as it were, seem to manage only half of Fanon's call for critique. It is not enough, to reiterate, to conceptualize how politics impacts psychology; we need an awareness also of the psychological working of power, of how subjectivity repeats, reiterates, reinforces the political. After all, these two categories are inseparably joined: just as it is not good enough to engage psychology without a consideration of power, so it is insufficient to engage certain forms of power, like that of racism, without a consideration of its 'conditions of subjectivity'. And indeed, the case of racism is instrumental here. As Fanon makes quite clear, to adopt a psychological/psychoanalytic engagement with racism is not necessarily to imply that the denigratory imaging of blackness – to take one example that he (1986) uses – is in any way a natural, ahistorical, predisposed quality of cerebral matter, as it seems is the implication of Jungian psychoanalysis. To adopt a psychological engagement with racism is though to assert the regularity, the deployable frequency of such depictions; it *is* to assert that racist images of this sort feature strongly in the psychical phenomena of the minds of racist/colonial societies. Fanon's point is that such images circulate widely, indeed *penetratively*, across the affective and psychic channels of society, propping up the contents of individual dreams, phobias, symptoms, neuroses of colonizer and colonized alike, taking root at the micro-political level of individual psychology, although *without being simply reducible to this psychic level of realization*.

It remains imperative as such to understand how psychic structure, how *details of individual psychology* and psychical mechanisms may recapitulate political structure, to acknowledge that *neither* political nor psychical structure on its own makes for a sufficient basis of analysis. This, admittedly, is a point of critique that holds better for certain trends within critical psychology than for others. I have in mind here particularly those trends of analysis that focus more on grappling with the ideological impact of psychology *as itself* a powerful discourse than with exploring the substantive *psychological, affective* or *psychical* underpinnings of a political phenomena like that of racism. In certain instances this is with good cause, the cause being wariness towards the ideological bent of much psychological language, a reticence towards slipping into the apparent individualism, reductionism and de-politicization it so typically entails. A number of important texts from within the ambit of critical psychology share this characteristic, typically those which centralize the role of post-structural theory, or, much by the same token, that adopt a predominantly social constructionist orientation towards analysis (see for example volumes edited by Gergen & Grauffman, 1996; Levett, Kottler, Burman & Parker, 1997; Nightingale & Cromby, 1999; Parker & Shotter, 1990; Shotter & Gergen, 1989). Also emblematic of this trend are Edwards & Potter, 1992; Gergen, 1999,

2001; Harre & Stearns, 1995; Parker, Georgaca, Harper, McLaughlin & Stowell Smith, 1995).

This is not always the case though; the work of Frosh (1989, 2002a) makes for a strong counterpoint here. While firm that a socio-political and often discursive account of racism is necessary - and that a psychological account should by no means act as a substitute for such a level of engagement - he nonetheless insists that both such forms of analysis are vital. We need an approach that is able to properly engage the affective and psychological components of the political phenomenon of racism. We need explain how such phenomena 'become...an integral part of the emotional life of the racist individual...the emotional and ideological intensity with which [racist] group identity [is] constructed' (Frosh, 1989, p. 215). (In this connection see also Frosh, 2001, 2002b, 2002c; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002).

None of this is of course to suggest that the discipline of psychology has provided us with a set of trustworthy instruments; historically it most certainly has not. (For discussion of the role of psychology in the perpetuation of racism (as a case in point), see Foster, 1991, 1993; on the topic of psychological instrumentation and power, see Rose, 1991, 1996). As such it is necessary to maintain a certain distance and critical mistrust toward many of the conceptual tools that the discipline at our disposal. However, in so far as the over-arching critical agenda remains that of analyzing and disrupting the functioning of power, psychological forms of analysis and critique remain crucial. It is useful here to refer to Foster (1991), who argues that 'Psychology as a product of modernity has in the main been a productive servant in the reproduction of major forms of inequality and oppression - patriarchy, racism, class domination' (p. 347). Nevertheless, whilst scathing towards the 'postivistic, individualistic, politically conservative roots' of psychology (p. 347) he nonetheless holds out hope for the emancipatory potential of the discipline, presenting it, at least in part, as a resource of liberation (Foster, 2004) (as do Lykes, Banuazizi, Liem & Morris, 1996 and Martin-Baro, 1994).

I should be clear here: textual or discursive models of analysis have made vital and often innovative contributions to the critique and understanding of racism, as a series of recent studies drawn from the South African context demonstrates (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Dixon & Reicher, 1997; Dixon, Reicher & Foster, 1997; Durrheim, 1997; Durrheim and Dixon, 2001). Indeed, discursive or social constructionist modes of analysis have certainly provided us with a 'replacement vocabulary', alternative modes of conceptualization through which aspects of racist behavior may be formulated beyond the constraints of purely psychological terms of reference. This, in many ways, is a benefit. The question remains however whether a crucial *psychological* component is neglected by such accounts, and whether, as a result, their explanatory efficacy suffers. Let me give an example that continues the above concern with racism. The above approaches to racism all leave unexamined the psychical question of desire. Now, for both Fanon (1986) and Bhabha (1994), such an omission must undermine the efficacy of the critique of racism in question. No analysis of (post)-colonial racism can, for these theorists, be sufficient unless it involves consideration of issues of fantasy, sexuality, ambivalence and desire, each of which is taken as an integral part of the radical asymmetries of power and privilege, which characterize such contexts. This is not to say that psychoanalysis is being positioned as *the* privileged mode of explanation, nor is to demand a dogmatic loyalty to its discourse; both theorists evoke a hybrid *bricolage* of concepts and explanatory vehicles in their approach to racism. It is though to suggest that there is something indispensable about a psychological/psychoanalytic contribution to the understanding

of racism. Bhabha (1986) addresses a similar point when he refers to the failure of the standard array of critical systems (narratives that is, of economic necessity, historical progress, critical humanism) regards understanding the politics of race. The *psychical affectivity* of racism, in his (1986) estimation, elides all such attempts at explanation.

There is an important point of contextualization to be added here: Bhabha is not antagonistic towards post-structural or discursive modes of analysis; he views these as necessary compliments to his particular brand of psychoanalytic theorizing. Bhabha views himself as extending those attempts, like that of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), to understand formations of colonial knowledge and/or racism in predominantly discursive terms. Indeed, the latter text provides the initial co-ordinates for Bhabha's own project of postcolonial critique; the challenge of conceptualizing the structure and functioning of colonial discourse remains an imperative across his work. However, the knowledge and power of colonial discourse, like the functional utility of racism - and this is the vital point - cannot for Bhabha (1994), be resolved *in purely epistemological terms*. Part of the resulting corrective that Bhabha aims to deliver to Said, as Moore-Gilbert (1997) notes - and this is the point we need apply to the critique of critical psychology - is the awareness that the utilization of discourse is not unaffected by psychical dynamics of desire and ambivalence. 5

These concerns with the psychological/psychical dimension of racism mirrors those of Lane (1998), Shepherdson (1998), Žižek (1998) all of whom argue that discursive/ideological approaches appear unable to properly explain certain of racism's most vital characteristics: its affective charge, its libidinal currents, the racist's formidable investment in their own racial hatred, the racist's pleasure-in-hating. Indeed, failing to engage the personalized affectivity of racism, the individualized psychical mechanics that underscore its discursive functioning leaves us curiously unable to account for the persistence of racism, its pronounced irrationality, its compulsive qualities, the visceral quality of its hatred, its continuous, seemingly repetitive nature. To speak in more grounded terms: we need strong psychological accounts of racism if racism is to be adequately examined, confronted and hence contested. The question that we need confront certain trends within critical psychology with is whether racism *as a psychological or psychical phenomena* has not been able to slip from their grasp, ironically enough, because critical psychology has not permitted itself access enough to, reasonable enough purchase upon, *the conceptual domain of the psychological*. Indeed, by neglecting the psychological/psychical as a critical means of explanation and/or critique, critical psychology seems to have undermined its own critical efficacy regards the phenomena of racism. Oddly, the focus on the turn to text that has proved so central to its efforts in the last decade might represent its most pronounced critical limitation, especially so if these efforts have become largely limited to the discursive as its conceptual and methodological analytical mode of choice, to conceiving of racism as an issue of representation, rhetorical strategy, signifiatory practice, etc.

It is again necessary here to qualify the terms of my argument, for, indeed, the early turn to discourse on the part of some critical psychologists was undertaken in conjunction with an interest in psychoanalytic concepts. The interest in subjectivity and desire is outlined in the landmark *Changing the Subject* (Henriques *et al*, 1984), which, in this respect can be contrasted with another influential work from the same period, Potter & Wetherell's (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology*. The tension between psychoanalytic and discursive approaches has in certain instances fuelled debate in the field. Hollway & Jefferson, for example, have focused on utilizing certain psychoanalytic concepts to the task of critical social research (2000) (although

one frequently has the suspicion that this is a somewhat domesticated version of psychoanalysis). The work of Parker is likewise pertinent; an engagement with psychoanalysis has consistently featured in his key works on critical psychology (1997, 2002); indeed he has treated it as a fundamental resource for the practice of critical psychology (1999). As true as this is, one might nevertheless contend that psychoanalytic modes of analysis are, often, as is to my mind the case in the above examples, accommodated only through a discursive frame, provisionally engaged, as one might put it, through the filter of social constructionism. I should, furthermore, be more specific here. My concerns are not simply to signal a greater need for rapprochement between discursive and psychoanalytic strands of critical psychology. This would be in many ways a redundant objective (although one might remark that psychoanalytic conceptualizations need not continually be restrained through an overarching adherence to post-structural theory). Likewise, my objective is not simply to comment on discursive approaches to racism. My objective, in a more general way, is to call attention to the need to utilize psychological modes of critique and conceptualization (psychoanalysis included, but by no means exclusively) toward the political and emancipatory objectives of critical psychology.

I might refocus the argument in the following way: we need beware the shortcomings of the conflation of ‘the critical’ with ‘the discursive’, which is perhaps also the difference between a critical psychology preoccupied with an external scrutiny of psychology, seeking to focus its critical energies on problematizing the place of psychological explanations in patterns of power and ideology (Parker, 2002), and the objectives of a *critical liberation psychology*, which, to quote Foster

involves questions of the psychological processes, dynamics, capacities and practices through which people may achieve emancipation, freedom, liberation and escape from particular power structures of oppression and exploitation. (2004, p. 541)

This distinction is exasperated in the context of developing societies like that of Southern Africa, where, as Van Vlaenderen and Neves (2004a) argue

critical psychology needs to move beyond the applied level of ideological critique to consider ways of refashioning itself so as to serve an emancipatory and socially transformative agenda that is properly responsive to the demands of...society. (p. 445)

Perhaps the crucial point here – which the comparison with postcolonial forms of criticism helps make very clear – is that critical psychology should be concerned both with critiquing oppressive uses of psychology and with enabling potentially transformative forms of practice and/or analysis that disrupt imbalances of power toward the objective of social equality. It is with this focus on the liberatory or emancipatory potential of psychology in the African context, that we now turn to the writings of Steve Biko.

### **Biko, Black Consciousness**

Biko provides another way of operationalizing a politics of the psyche, of drawing elements of a psychological vocabulary into a set of political agendas. As mentioned above, Biko exemplifies that line of psychopolitics that utilizes the terms of psychological experience *as means of consolidating resistances to power*, and in this respect he notably extends Fanon. As is the case with Fanon, and as bears repetition,

the crucial psychopolitical component of Biko's writings - in particular Black Consciousness's emphasis on a *psychological* politics of resistance - seems surprisingly undervalued in critical psychology. Biko's is a turning 'inside out' of the psychological into the political, and an 'outside in' of the political into the domain of psychological experience.

A few words of introduction are important here. There are elements of Biko's writing which may appear unfashionable today, his reference to seemingly static and idealized notions of an African culture seemingly lost and past, for example, or the apparent essentializing bent of an identity politics which may seem rigid, unaccommodating of dissent or internal difference, unable to adequately accommodate nuances of cultural hybridity, and so on. Against the tendency to dismiss Biko's writings as of pertinence only to their specific time and place, I argue for their continued vitality. More than this, I would argue that the consigning of Biko's writing to a discrete time and place of relevance is to do an injustice to both writer and ideas. There seems to me an imperative to re-read Biko, perhaps in view of Said's (1993) suggestion of contrapuntal reading, as way of evaluating the text in and out of its history, and putting it to work against a new set of political priorities.

Biko's view of Black Consciousness called for the psychological and cultural liberation of the black mind as the prerequisite for political freedom – in his own words: 'mental emancipation as a precondition to political emancipation' (Biko, cited in Arnold, 1972, p. xx). What is in question here is exactly 'the psychological battle for the minds of the black people' (Arnold, 1979, xxi). The context to this political project was 300 years of colonial rule, which had 'disfigured' the African past, and all but destroyed black 'imagination' (Biko, 1978). The mutilation of the black psyche, and, correspondingly, the systematic marginalization of those cultural resources through which it had traditionally attained autonomy and vitality, had been extreme. As such, the challenge of BC was to reverse the colonial imprint of a negative, racist self-image, and to replace it with a positive, more self-affirming – if not *angry* - forms of black identity and history. Importantly, 'blackness' here – and this is crucial point, particularly against contentions of essentialism - was not simply an issue of skin color, but was a form of solidarity, a collective form of hope and security, a way for black people to 'build up their humanity' (Biko, cited in Arnold, 1979 p. 34).

Emphatically then, we are not speaking here of a unified psychology of black essences, but a psychology based on disruptive historical experiences of oppression and marginality. This is reflected in Biko's definition of blacks as 'those who are by law or tradition politically, economically, and socially discriminated against as a group in South African society, and [who] identify themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realization of their aspirations' (1998, p. 360). In opposition to self-negating ways of thinking thus, Biko called for solidarity amongst those that apartheid labeled 'non-white', emphasizing the need for oppressed groups to identify with themselves and to advance the liberation struggle on this basis. 'Blackness' as a kind of politics was hence, as Arnold (1979) argues, a deliberate attempt to lay the intellectual and emotive base for ultimate political unity between Apartheid's others. It is on this basis that Biko (1978) took up the mandate to emphasize the role of a healthy subjectivity, of a robust, proud and positive self-image, as a means of empowering one's self to resist oppression.

Importantly then, we need to read Biko's Black Consciousness as *a politics of solidarity*, which celebrates blackness and concomitant notions of identity and culture around this political objective, of liberation, not simply as ends in themselves. <sup>7</sup> Two points of historical contextualization are pertinent here. We need bear in mind, firstly,

that apartheid's success was in many ways due to its divide-and-conquer approach which systematically cultivated in-group violence (often on ethnic lines) among the black populous, preventing - as an absolute strategic imperative - the forging of any over-arching unity, class (or here, *race*) consciousness, any form of solidarity among the oppressed masses, who, as is well known, vastly outnumbered the white minority (Lapping, 1987). Hence Black Consciousness's prioritization of a robust and unifying *group identity* of resistance. Secondly, we need keep sight of the extreme racism characteristic of apartheid, a system not merely of depersonalization/desubjectivization, but of violent racial objectification and dehumanization.

This radical depersonalization is an important point to bear in mind, especially against those forms of critique, such as that made by Butchart (1997) (following Foucault), that Black Consciousness might itself be classified as a self-subjectivizing system that manufactured 'a new and essentialist African personality...wherein each African was his own overseer, exercising surveillance over and against himself' (p. 104). Despite that Black Consciousness need not necessarily be essentialist (the basis for solidarity is a *communality of oppression*, not, as in negritude, that of an African essence), one also needs bear in mind here that Foucault's (1977) critique of self-subjectivizing modes of power occurs within the context of liberal, democratic Western societies, and in reference to individualized, personalized subjects, who constitute a very different set of referents to the dehumanized racial 'objects' of black men and women in apartheid. In terms of the latter, subjectification is itself a progressive political, and properly *liberatory* aim, particularly so if it entails a definition and programme of identity focused in deliberate opposition to the practices, values, norms and ideology of the state.

Biko's attempts to raise to the level of humanity of the racially objectified black subject should not as such be taken as a kind of bland moral humanism. Rather such attempts need to be understood as part of the attempt to respond to a level of utter depersonalization and objectification - perhaps difficult to understand by those who have never experienced such a radical disempowerment - that is, as part of a political project that acknowledges the degree to which negative forms of identity can be central features of oppression. Biko explains this well in his declaration that

Reduced to an obliging shell [the black subject]...looks with awe at the white power structure and accepts what he [sic] regards as the 'inevitable position'...The black man has become a shadow, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave and ox, bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity. (Biko, cited in Lapping, 1984, p. 158)

Crucial again here is an awareness of the double direction of racism, of the fact that racism may be sourced, as Fanon (1986) had argued, both inside and outside the racial subject. The point here is that the internalization of self-depreciating identities is a key political tactic of oppression. Hence Biko's remark that 'the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed' (in Arnold, 1979, p. xx). This of course is a remark that also emphasizes the role, and the potential, of identity in political resistance.

A key strategy of Black Consciousness was conscientization. Conscientization, as was the case for Paulo Freire (1990), involves what Biko referred to as protest talk, talk about circumstances of oppression that links the everyday conditions of experience to a set of political antecedents. Here then the turning inside out of the

psychological into the political, and an 'outside in' of the political into psychological experience, as mentioned above. Conscientization involved the repeated attempt to

make reference to the conditions of the Black man [sic] and the conditions in which the Black man lives. We try to get Blacks in conscientization to grapple realistically with their problems...to develop what one might call an awareness, a physical awareness of their situation...to be able to analyze it, and to provide answers for themselves. (Biko, in Arnold, 1979, p.33)

Like Fanon's, Biko's was a political project which involved a profound cultural awareness. Indeed, the consciousness-raising of Black Consciousness also involves a component of historical redress:

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

This process of 'correcting false images' must be undertaken by black men and women themselves 'Whites...from the outside...can never extract and analyze the ethos in the black community' (Biko, 1978, p. 363). This should not be taken as representing a segregationist viewpoint, rather Biko's (1998) concern is that blacks should not always be interpreted by whites. <sup>8</sup>

Black Consciousness then, to reiterate, emerges out of a twofold objective: an awareness of the imperative of generating political solidarity amongst the oppressed, and the need to disrupt and halt the massive and systematic depersonalization of so-called 'non-whites' in apartheid. Each of these objectives finds their place within the larger political goal of black liberation and independence from oppression, the overriding importance of which Biko is quick to stress:

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

Biko hence utilizes the trope of the psychological as a strategic and, importantly, *conditional* mode of doing politics, without ultimately, like Fanon, allowing it too much of its own autonomy. To be clear: by the 'trope' of the psychological I mean to refer both to psychology's array of explanatory concepts, and to its characteristic preoccupation of reflection on lived experience and identity. This is a utilization - consistent in certain ways with how Fanon and Bhabha press the domain of the psychological into kinds of political work - that itself poses a series of interesting questions: What is it about such psychological formulations which makes them so efficacious in the writing of critique? What are the particular properties that the language of psychology potentially lends to a discourse of dissent, to the project of practicing, indeed, *experiencing*, resistance?

It is of course essential here that we resist codifying Biko's politics into exclusively psychological terms of explanation. (Much of the same problem arises in connection with Fanon's use of the notion of alienation, which in its

economic/materialist/Marxist resonances cannot be reduced simply into a psychological kind of understanding (see Bulhan, 1985; Zahar, 1969). Indeed, as Mnguni (2000) points out, the body of literature on Black Consciousness should not be seen as for the most chiefly psychologically orientated; it utilizes a spread of historical, cultural and even theological revitalizations of black identity. Kros (1999) is helpful here. The rehabilitation of identity and history that Black Conscious aims at is not, she (1999) argues, to be understood as an individualized exercise in positive thinking, a building of self-esteem. The determination of the black man or woman to rise and attain the envisaged self is clearly not to be reduced to a kind of self-help psychology (Kros, 1999). The point is exactly to connect psychological kinds of conceptualization and modes of reflection to a far larger political projects, not to keep the two spheres separate, hence the notion of the psycho-political, the idea of political consciousness. To reiterate: the drive to overcome political oppression through collective effort is not simply a psychological 'formula of identity' (Kros, 1999) - the project here is exactly that of political identity: the use of identity as a kind of weapon, as political instrument. The psychological means of articulating this envisaged self are hence useful precisely inasmuch as they further this end, and not beyond.

Biko's writing provides an invaluable perspective on the potential critical and political utilization of a discourse of the psychological. One of the lessons we can take from Biko is that of the importance and *the means*, of thinking a psychology of dissidence and resistance, indeed, of applying our conceptual efforts within psychology toward these ends. In fact, his work gives rise to a number of questions concerning the political utility of the psychological. Why the continued return to a language of psychology (as in Fanon, Bhabha and Biko) to formulate resistance? What is it about this conceptual domain that makes it so crucial a vocabulary of opposition? Here then is a prospective question for a future critical psychology more willing to engage the political value of psychological conceptualizations.

Perhaps more trenchantly however, Biko's work demonstrates a commitment to resistance – indeed, it is true to say that Biko's writings begin and end with this overarching objective – a political centring that many social scientific and psychological types of discourse, critical psychology included, would find unfamiliar. Biko's writing, like that of Fanon, hence offers a set of 'social psychological' theorizations that cannot be viewed apart from designs of social action. Indeed, this work came into being exactly in response to immediate contexts of oppression, a factor that means they do not exhibit the gap - seemingly characteristic of critical psychology - between intellectual analysis and practical political engagement. This consideration makes the absence of Fanon and Biko from critical psychology, a 'heterogeneous process of critique' eager to align itself with political activity, more puzzling still. Indeed, it is via a comparison with the writings of Biko and Fanon that one gets a sense of exactly how far from an actual politics of social change the efforts of particularly discursive varieties of critical psychology in fact are. (Again here it is important to draw a distinction between discursive, constructionist modes of critical psychology (such as that of Hepburn, 2003; Parker, 2002; Walkerdine, 2002) as opposed to more practically-orientated liberatory approaches to critical psychology who, in line with the above, take as a priority the development of a critical psychology of social change (for example, see Banuazizi, 1996; Lykes, 2002, 2003; Prilleltensky, 2001; Prilleltensky & Austin, 2001; Van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004a, 2004b).

In commenting on the legacy of anti-colonial writings such as those of Fanon and Biko, Gibson notes that

What remains a philosophical project is how one begins to articulate the meaning of mass action, expand the new social consciousness derived from the cultures of resistance and solidarity into new directions. (1999, p. 38).

Can discursive, constructionist varieties of critical psychology realistically lay claim to any of these objectives, of expanding social consciousness, developing cultures of solidarity or resistance, of thinking the role and meaning of mass action?

### **Critical psychology and the postcolonial: Future intersections**

In drawing to a close it seems apt to return to Hayes (2001), and his suggestion that the current imperative for critical psychology is that of engaging with, and developing, a set of concepts with the ability to transcend abstract forms of analysis and point the way to practical political engagement, because 'critical psychology would be...incomplete if it did not try to take on the injustices and inequalities of the world' (p. 47). Concurring with Hayes, I have argued above that the contemporary turn to discourse in critical psychology has played a significant role in negating the psychological realm as a domain of resistance and critique. I have suggested that postcolonial thought offers a set of concepts through which we might transcend the discursive register of much critical psychology. In the case of Fanon and Biko one has a set of examples of how postcolonial criticism offers a way of closing the gap between intellectual and political activity, between insular critique and the impetus to broader social action. Both, furthermore, provide an impetus toward a psychology of resistance, a psychological means of thinking the effects of marginalization, discrimination, alterity, which moves beyond an accentuation of psychic damage, beyond a 'rhetoric of blame', to use Said's (1993) phrase, towards a strategic consolidation of 'psychopolitical' resources, be those communal (a solidarity of the oppressed) or personal (a politics of everyday experience).

One way of bringing together the 'critical psychologies' of postcolonial critics such as Fanon, Biko and Bhabha is via the notion of the psychopolitical. Here I have in mind a reciprocal form of critique in which we not only place the psychological within the register of the political, but, perhaps more challengingly, in which the political is also - although strategically - approached through the register of the psychological. What the writings of Fanon and Biko make plain in this connection is the degree to which the narratives and concepts of the social psychological may be reformulated so as to fashion a novel discourse of resistance, one that opens up new avenues for critique for critical psychology, on one hand, and one that affords an innovative set of opportunities for the psychological investigation of the vicissitudes of the postcolonial, on the other.

If Fanon could be said to have a 'lesson' for critical psychology it may well be the lesson that psychology itself should not be abandoned as a means of conceptualizing oppression, especially not in the case of confronting racism, a phenomena that seems as psychical as it does political in nature. As Fanon's psychiatric work testifies, the micro-political level of individual psychology cannot simply be ignored in projects of liberation. Fanon also (here perhaps in tandem with Bhabha) has a lesson for a critical psychology that would ignore the psychical dimensions power (as in the emblematic case of racism), for those theories which rely too heavily on the 'discursivity' of power without engaging the psychic terrain, the

complexities of desire, ambivalence, identification and sexuality that play their part in such formations of power. Biko has a lesson for a critical psychology that would abandon psychology as a means of thinking resistance, as an instrumental language in motivating the resistance talk of conscientization. He likewise has a lesson for those forms of psychology which would attempt to think dissidence and resistance, but who have neglected the instrumentality of identity. (The 'instrumentality of identity' that is not in the essentialist capacity, but rather as a psychology based on historical experiences of oppression and marginality).

While this paper has focused largely on aspects of the history of race relations between and within Europe and Africa (and South Africa), the modes of critique and conceptualization called upon here may of course inform how one understands the politics of alterity in a variety of other domains. I should emphasize this point: postcolonial criticism offers a new and expanding field of concepts which may be used as tools by psychologists attempting politically-engaged psychology in their own local spheres. The imperative this paper points to is that of exploring a set of intersections between critical psychological and postcolonial concerns. Such a set of interactions would develop far beyond the tentative outline offered here, and may indeed provide the basis of an ongoing and developing project that propels the prospects of thinking and writing a psychology of resistance. Let me give one (further) speculative example before closing, the case of what one might guardedly refer to as Bhabha's 'psychology' of doubling.

In describing the effects of Bhabha's criticism one is tempted to use a visual metaphor - his criticism is like the conceptual equivalent of looking into a kaleidoscope: it splits, doubles, fragments the objects in the view of his analysis, complexifying the terrain, continually producing fissures of ambiguity and hence resistance. One of Bhabha's assets as a thinker would seem to be the purchase he gives us on the notion of resistance, even if it is (characteristically) ambiguously formulated in his work, in for example, the subversions of what he calls 'sly civility', the slippages of colonial mimicry, the doubling of the hybrid. This is the continual strategy of his writing. As opposed to Edward Said whose earlier work spends much of its time impressing upon us the awesome discursive power of what he calls orientalism, Bhabha endeavors to read the internal insecurities and doubts within the patterns and operations of colonial discourses and apparatuses of power alike. He is continually attentive to how such implementations of power open up opportunities for their own subversion (Campbell, 2000). So, to give an example, whereas Fanon focuses a good deal of attention on the colonized, famously asking, via Freud, 'what does the black man want?', Bhabha seems concerned with balancing this attention on the oppressed with an attention to the desire of the colonizer, with implicitly asking 'what does the white man want?'. One of the places that this line of concern takes him - as part of the attempt to think the ambivalence of colonial authority and identity - is to a querying of the narcissistic demand of the colonial forces of oppression. If narcissistic demand is a workable concept here - bearing in mind Bhabha's apparent slippage between social and individual registers, narcissistic demand here, furthermore, being employed as a basic condition of social apparatuses of power - then it may lead us to a potential 'Achilles heel' of this order of power. We might, in other words, be able to menace the procedures of this power, exploit the paranoia of its mechanisms by refusing its narcissistic demands of self-affirmation. This may be the subtle difference between a subservient obedience and a sly civility opened up by the moment of colonial mimicry whose function is never to harmonize or compliment,

but instead, to camouflage, never simply to reaffirm or reiterate, but to repeat with difference and anxiety.

In short, Bhabha enables a theory, routed through psychoanalysis, of how power may be troubled, of how anxieties may be produced within it, through the vehicle of troublesome objects and events which defy easy categorization exactly by following too strictly the colonial injunction to be the same but not quite, or in Bhabha's own memorable phrase, 'almost the same but not white' (1994, p. 89). I offer these comments in a speculative and experimental way; clearly an attempt to adequately apply Bhabha's often complex formulations within the remit of critical psychology would require a far more sustained and analytical engagement with his work. My point is simply to suggest that there may be any number of ways in which we might further the intersections of postcolonial criticism and critical psychology. Furthermore, this example points to the fact that the concept of a psychopolitical psychology might be used to 'decolonize the mind' in a way that does not necessarily reflect the 'precolonized' state of mind, but that rather allows us to understand the creation of a third, incommensurable, hybrid space. The psychology of resistance thus enabled would not necessarily hence be one a pristine, pure or decolonized state of mind, but would refer rather to an assertion of presence – or voice – that had been previously muted and not given the space in which to speak. <sup>9</sup> In this respect we find a convergence of theorization on behalf of a variety of postcolonial theorists who focus on the necessity of creating the cultural, historical and material conditions under which the subaltern can come forward and speak for him or herself (in this respect, see Guha, 1988; Guha & Spivak, 1988; Prakash, 1990, 1992; Said, 1993; Spivak, 1988, 1996). A whole new vista of speculative possibilities thus for the theorization of resistance.

To finish, a return to Bhabha. If it is indeed the case that, as he (1994) puts it, it is on the basis of the affective experience of social/political marginality that we are able to transform and renew our critical strategies, if, furthermore, it is from those who have suffered subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement that we learn our most enduring critical lessons, then a critical psychology that makes no real engagement with the theory or criticism of the postcolonial would seem to be no critical psychology at all.

## Notes

1. Fanon and Biko of course are more accurately referred to as 'anti-colonial' thinkers in as much as they are working prior to the formal demise of colonial or apartheid regimes of oppression. While it is true that anti-colonial texts of this sort tend to be more focussed on the immediate concerns of liberation than are postcolonial criticisms whose ambit is more that of the cultural and political import of the ongoing historical effects of colonisation (Said's work (1978, 1993) is a good case in point), both literatures clearly share fundamental commitments to concerns of racism, marginality, cultural dispossession and the politics of racial and cultural identity. I have opted here to retain the more generic and encompassing term of 'postcolonial', as is typically the convention, because I wish to refer to a broad sway of criticism and theory that has yet to find its way into psychological discourse.
2. This no doubt this is a bold claim, for crucial texts the likes of Césaire's (1972) *Discourse on Colonialism* were in existence: I refer here to the particular, hybrid nature of Fanon's critique, the innovative bending of existential, psychoanalytic, Marxist and psychiatric modes of commentary into a unique critical vocabulary.
3. Fanon's sociogenetic approach to psychopathology also finds its place here, particularly his insistence, via the idea of 'pathologies of liberty', that a wide range of psychopathological symptoms in oppressed/colonized groups needs be seen as the

- outcome of a double process, *primarily socio-political*, and only subsequently, as *internalised* form of damage. In colonial contexts, he claims: 'The neurotic structure of the individual is simply the elaboration, the formation, the eruption within the ego, of conflictual clusters arising in part out of the environment and in part out of the purely personal way in which the individual reacts to these influences' (1986, p. 81).
4. This point resonates strongly with Edward Said's (1983) notion of 'secular criticism', namely the idea that disciplinary purism - and its concomitant preoccupation with a precise, insular technical vocabulary - precisely prevents a political mode of criticism, functioning, by contrast, to effectively foreclose the asking of certain political questions, the making of important political links. The project of secular criticism hence should make texts (in Said's domain of literary criticism), or, more pertinently perhaps *psyches* (in the domain of Fanon's concerns in *Black Skin, White Masks*), reassume their 'affiliations with institutions, agencies, classes, ideologically defined parties' (Said, 1983, p. 212).
  5. To remain unaware of this fact means that one's model of colonial discourse becomes strangely static, lacking in flexibility, monolithic even, too rigidly structured along the master-slave dialectic. Indeed, there are a number of densely inter-woven problems for Bhabha that deserve more extended treatment. Briefly, a model of colonial discourse that does not adequately grapple with psychical dynamics 1) allows for insufficient engagement with the details of enunciation (that is, the specificity of the location and address of exchange), 2) too easily assumes a single over-riding political intention on the part of the colonizer, 3) fixes the relationship between discourse and politics into a deterministic or functionalist model, 4) pays too little attention to the theorization of resistance or interference (to the possibility of what Bhabha (1994) refers to as the 'disarticulation' of the colonial subject) (Childs & Williams, 1997; Moore-Gilbert, 1997; Young, 1990).
  6. Black Consciousness, even in the South African context that I focus on here, is clearly not reducible to Biko alone, as the writings of Manganyi (1973, 1977, 1981), Fattou (1986), and more recently, Mnguni (2000), make clear. (See also Couve, 1984; Mzamane 1991; Nengwekhulu, 1981; Sono, 1993).
  7. It makes for interesting speculation here, to consider, as part of a potential psychology of resistance, that a politics of solidarity may well be based on a shifting set of co-ordinates, which, perhaps like Spivak's 'strategic essentialism' may appear essentialist in nature but in fact are not, although they constitute a critical mass of sorts for political action.
  8. It is easy here, as Kros (1999) notes, to soften Biko's radicalism on this point. Indeed, Biko rejected the idea that blacks should in any way be assimilated into 'white society', and on this basis that he argued that whiteness was a concept that 'warrants being despised, hated, destroyed and replaced by an aspiration with more human content in it' (Biko, 1978, p. 77). In Kros's own terms: "'whiteness', no less than 'blackness' [for Biko] was a historically constituted identity with profoundly limiting ramifications for those who found themselves defined by it. It was not to be shed...simply by an act of goodwill precisely because it was so bound up with long historical processes and entrenched material interests' (1999, p. 7).
  9. I owe this point to Sunil Bhatia.

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