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POLITICS AND PATHOLOGIES
On the subject of race in psychoanalysis

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SUBJECT, RACE, AND NATION

In the final chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth,* Frantz Fanon outlines the psychiatric disorders that colonial violence produces in both Algerians and their French colonizers. After a brief but peremptory statement about the pathology of "reactionary psychoses" that stem from colonial conflict, Fanon describes four case studies. This chapter, "Colonial War and Mental Disorders," follows the text's more famous sections on violence and national consciousness that, no doubt, earned it the reputation of revolutionary handbook (the Grove edition bears the bold subtitle "handbook for the black revolution"). Fanon himself notes the incongruity of the subject matter: "Perhaps these notes on psychiatry will be found ill-timed and singularly out of place in such a book" (1991b: 249). Though he does not head off this anticipated challenge (he gives it a characteristic dismissal: "…but we can do nothing about that"), we might ask what this somewhat fragmented and unframed collection of colonial mental disorders is doing in a political manifesto. What does the juxtaposition suggest about the relationship between the subject and the nation? About the relationship between discourses of the psychological and the political? In the first half of this essay, I address these questions by discussing some of the disciplinary and theoretical tensions among discourses of race, nation, and subject. In the second half, I examine the Hollywood film *Home of the Brave* (1949) in an attempt to use those tensions productively for theorizing the politics of racial subjectivity.

The location of "Colonial War and Mental Disorders" at the end of the text could be seen as a displacement of psychoanalysis from the center of Fanon's critical approach—where it is in his earlier work *Black Skin, White Masks*—in favor of theories of nationalism and Marxism. This development in Fanon's writing has sometimes been cast as a progressive evolution from an apolitical to a political stance. Proponents of this teleological outlook object to the recent resurgence of interest in *Black Skin, White Masks*. As an example of this position, Stuart Hall paraphrases Cedric Robinson's claim

that to privilege *Black Skin, White Masks* over *The Wretched of the Earth*
is a motivated political strategy which, perversely, reads Fanon backwards,
from his "immersion in the revolutionary consciousness of the Algerian
peasantry" to the "petit-bourgeois stink" of the former text.

(Hall 1996:15)

Certainly, between the writing of *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of
the Earth* Fanon did become more politically active, abandoning the French
colonial machinery that had brought him to Algeria and participating in the
Algerian revolution. Moreover, *Black Skin, White Masks* is not the call to
revolution that is *The Wretched of the Earth*. Nonetheless, Fanon's return to the
psyche toward the end of *The Wretched of the Earth* signals his continuing
demand that we explore the interdependence of nation and subject.[1] Fanon
describes how colonial occupation entails a process of dehumanization which
causes a crisis of identity in the colonized: "Because it is a systematic negation
of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all
attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask
themselves the question constantly: 'In reality, who am I?'" (1991b:250). Thus,
for Fanon, "[i]ndividual alienation and political alienation are related; both are
the product of social, political, and cultural conditions that must be transformed"
(Vergès 1996:49). The structure of Fanon's text—the truncated discussion of the
psychiatric cases tacked onto the call for national consciousness—models both
the difficulty and the necessity of conjoining the discourses of political and
psychic identities.

The theoretical ambivalence that relegates "Colonial War and Mental
Disorders" to an appendix-like form has been amplified by much contemporary
antiracist discourse which exhibits a disjunction between the psychic and the
political. Until the last decade, Fanonian critics and activists enacted the
disjunction between Marxism and psychoanalysis by passing over *Black Skin,
White Masks* in favor of Fanon's later work (Hall 1996:14). More recently, *Black
Skin, White Masks* has enjoyed a renaissance in postcolonial theory, not least
because of Homi Bhabha's treatments; they renewed our sense that
psychoanalytic concepts work in colonial contexts (Bhabha 1983; 1989; 1990).
Colonial power and native resistance operate through (among other things)
desire, language, subjectivity, and masquerade—staples of psychoanalytic
thought. By contrast to postcolonial theory, African-American literary and
cultural theory has shown less interest in critical discourses of the subject,
including psychoanalysis; "race has been most thoroughly examined in terms of
domination and agency rather than subjectivity" (Abel *et al.* 1997:5). In general,
recent work in African-American and poststructuralist theories has exposed the
ideological and discursive processes that produce the conceptual category "race,"
but has paid far less attention to the processes through which the subject
internalizes these cultural determinations.[2] So, although W.E.B.Du Bois's term
"double consciousness" has become standard shorthand to describe African-

American subjectivity, the condition of double consciousness remains relatively undertheorized (Du Bois 1994:2). This neglect is due, in part, to the assumed incongruity between psychoanalysis and the politics of racial difference which, in turn, is part of a broader skepticism about the relevance and propriety of poststructuralist theory for African-American studies.

What accounts for this reticence toward psychoanalytic and other poststructuralist discourses? Some critics argue that poststructuralism represents the Western critical tradition that long excluded the literature of African-Americans, women, and other minorities. Barbara Christian's well-known essay "The Race for Theory," first published in 1988, exemplifies this position; invoking terms of cultural imperialism to describe the rise of poststructuralism in the academy, Christian writes, "[T]here has been a takeover in the literary world by Western philosophers from the old literary elite, the neutral humanists" (1990: 37). Critics such as Christian privilege methodologies grounded in African-American cultural specificity. That African-American critics have devised culturally attuned critical frameworks is suggested by Henry Louis Gates's somewhat tentative acknowledgment, in his state-of-the-field essay "Criticism in the Jungle," that he has ventured further afield:

> I have been concerned…with that complex relationship between what is useful to call 'the representative' in black letters and its modes of 'representation,' of mimesis. To explore this relation, moreover, I have attempted…to 'read' the black tradition closely, drawing eclectically on the activity of reading as practiced by those outside the black literary traditions.
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> (1984:4–5)[3]

Another criticism of poststructuralism is that, in attempting to deconstruct identity, it potentially elides the history and experience of African-Americans who have been subjected to intransigent racial categories regardless of their fictive nature. Toni Morrison explains:

> For three hundred years black Americans insisted that "race" was no usefully distinguishing factor in human relationships. During those same three centuries every academic discipline, including theology, history, and natural science, insisted "race" was *the* determining factor in human development. When blacks discovered they had shaped or become a culturally formed race, and that it had specific and revered difference, suddenly they were told there is no such thing as "race," biological or cultural, that matters and that genuinely intellectual exchange cannot accommodate it.
>
> (Morrison 1994:370)

As Morrison suggests, the political effect of deconstructing race is contingent on who is doing it when, where, and for what purpose. Despite various calls to bridge the gap, the critical tension between recognizing African-American cultural specificity, on the one hand, and deconstructing race, on the other, remains.[4]

The roots of psychoanalysis also lie far from the African-American context. Psychoanalysis's modernist, bourgeois, European origins have made it seem irrelevant, at best, to African-American culture and experience. Admittedly, classic psychoanalysis emphasizes gender and sexuality as the determining factors of social organization and subjectivity, neglecting racial difference altogether. Furthermore, psychoanalytic theory has tended to describe psychology in terms of universal frameworks that ignore cultural and historical specificity. Although feminist psychoanalytic and film theories have revised psychoanalysis substantially, in part, by reading its gender bias as symptomatic rather than normative, these discourses have famously ignored the dimension of race in processes of subject formation. Jane Gaines and bell hooks have eloquently leveled this charge against feminist theorists; Gaines, for example, writes that conventional feminist film theory, "based on the psychoanalytic concept of sexual difference, is unequipped to deal with a film which is about racial difference and sexuality" (1986:61).[5] Thus, psychoanalytic theory needs substantial reworking to better account for racial subjectivity. We need to address psychoanalysis's historic inattention to race, to extend it beyond the scope of its early twentieth-century origins, and to ground analysis of subjectivity in a material, social context.[6] More than any other text, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* has inaugurated a discourse of race and psychoanalysis by grounding a psychoanalytic study of the colonial dynamic in a sociopolitical context.

To say that critics generally consider psychoanalysis and the politics of racial difference incompatible is not to say that we lack a large body of complex and eclectic African-American literary and cultural theory. Nor is it to say that even most critics in the field today are skeptical of poststructuralism. Rather, I would argue that the politics of disciplinary traditions and the biased omissions of psychoanalytic theory have contributed toward a significant and persistent divergence between psychoanalytic and African-American discourses. Although feminist and African-American theorists have been calling attention to feminism's bias in favor of white, middle-class women—a bias that has operated in feminist psychoanalytic theory also—for at least a decade, we have not yet satisfactorily refitted psychoanalysis for exploring how race operates as a factor in subject formation. The experiences of the editors of a recent anthology on race, psychoanalysis, and feminism, *Female Subjects in Black and White,* illustrate the persistent divide. They discovered that their contributors were less interested in revamping psychoanalysis to better account for racial subjectivity than in "questioning the languages available for representing unconscious processes, modes of healing, and the social formation of the female subject" (Abel *et al.*

1997:5). Even the editors themselves disagreed over the collection's purpose; the two white editors, Elizabeth Abel and Helene Moglen, had envisioned "a revised psychoanalytic discourse [that] could provide a common set of terms for coordinating race, gender, and subjectivity" (5). Barbara Christian, the lone black editor, remained concerned about representing the critical methodologies "that had been suppressed or denigrated by the academy" (4). They ultimately "came to envisage this collection as a series of dialogues, rather than reconciliations, between feminist psychoanalysis and African American representations of female subjectivity" (1).[7]

Although I have briefly outlined the conflict between psychoanalytic and African-American critical discourses, I expect neither to resolve the differences nor to examine fully the claims of each side in this essay. I do, however, want to argue for the necessity of examining racial subjectivity—valid criticisms of the academy and discourses of psychoanalysis notwithstanding. How else can we engage with popular and political discourses that are rife with assumptions about racial psychology? For although academics and activists on the political left, in general, are reluctant to discuss the psychic effects of racism for those who experience discrimination, the political right shows no such reticence. Conservative rhetoric links psychological attributes to racial identity; assumptions about the psychology of race are implicit in popular and political rhetoric about the laziness of welfare mothers and the burdens of self-doubt imposed on minorities by affirmative action programs. Too often, politicians and analysts use unacknowledged assumptions about the psychological effects of a "culture of poverty" that militates against "personal responsibility" to blame the economically disadvantaged for their lack of upward social mobility.[8] By ignoring the larger social context, pundits and politicians can blame social problems on the individual failure of will they suggest is endemic to a race. We are challenged to find a productive way to talk about the psychological effects of the historical trauma of American racist practices. The difficulty is to recognize the psychic damage caused by racism without representing oppressed minority subject positions as essentially compromised.[9]

No doubt the greatest danger in discussing the psychic effects of racism is the potential to pathologize blackness. There is a long record of such pathologizing from both conservative and liberal quarters. Historically, the psychiatric profession justified discrimination and reinforced myths of racial difference by marshaling scientific "evidence" to prove that blacks were intellectually inferior and tended to abnormal personalities.[10] From Dr. Samuel G.Morton's craniometric mismeasurings in 1840, to Arthur R.Jensen's assertion in the *Harvard Educational Review* (1969) that genetics plays a part in differences of IQ between whites and blacks, to Herrnstein and Murray's infamous *The Bell Curve* (1994), notions of black genetic inferiority will not die. Clinicians, politicians, and others have attributed to psychological deviance African-Americans' challenges to the racist status quo. A particularly ludicrous example of such rationalizing is that of Samuel Cartwright, an ante-bellum doctor who diagnosed

runaway slaves as suffering from *"drapetomania,"* the flight-from-home sickness, and who characterized unsubmissive slaves as exhibiting *dysaesethesia Aethiopica,* or "insensibility of nerves" and "hebetude of mind" (quoted in Thomas and Sillen 1972:2). Though Dr. Cartwright's claims seem incredible to us now, we cannot easily dismiss such faulty logic as a thing of the distant past.

Even advocates for racial equality sometimes invoke clinical terms to pathologize and thereby neutralize radical political protest. In order to whitewash the actual conditions of life for African-Americans, a 1947 *Ebony* editorial derides the disaffected protagonist of Chester Himes's novel *Lonely Crusade* by accusing both the character and Himes of being "infected with a psychosis that distorts their thinking and influences their every action in life" (*Ebony* 1947: 44). The *Ebony* editorial extends the mental illness metaphor with now-familiar cliches, writing that this "psychosis"

> is a mental condition that is a biological but not common sense response to the crimes committed by whites against Negroes…. It answers white hate with Negro hate, substitutes emotions for intelligence, dictates thinking with the skin rather than the brains. Its outer symptoms are constant breast beating about the terrible misfortune of being a Negro. Usually this develops into a persecution complex that results in chip-on-the-shoulder resentment of all whites.
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> (1947:44)

The editorial goes on to minimize America's systemic racism: "Yes, the Negro is deprived of his vote and sometimes of his life in many Southern states but where else in the world can a person yell as loud and long about it except in America?" (44). The infamous "Moynihan report," *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (1965), is a particularly notorious example of how even liberal social scientists have located the source of socioeconomic disparities in the black psyche, family, and community, rather than in the American sociopolitical system. The report attributes the problems of poor African-Americans to the "matriarchal" structure of the black family—a structure which, the report claims, deviates from the patriarchal norm exhibited by white families. In turn, children —especially boys—raised within the matriarchal family structure suffer personality disturbances. Although the report notes historical conditions that gave rise to the alleged matriarchal family structure, it nonetheless regards perceived differences as deviant rather than adaptive, and as a cause rather than an effect of current social ills.

Despite discourses of racial pathology, arguments about the psychic effects of racism sometimes further civil rights. Policies for educational reforms involving multiculturalism, ebonics, all-black schools, and ethnicity-oriented dormitories depend, to a large extent, on the notion that self-esteem and emotional environment affect measurable educational outcomes for black students.[11] In the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954), the Supreme Court

struck down school desegregation on the grounds that to separate children solely on the basis of race "generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and mind in a way unlikely ever to be undone" (Bell 1980:112).[12] The *Brown* decision broke with jurisprudential conventions because it weighed intangible factors of the psychological effects of racism to overturn the longstanding policy of segregation set by *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. The *Plessy* Court had dismissed Plessy's assertion that segregation institutionalized the racial inferiority of blacks, claiming that blacks only *imagined* this was so:

> We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff's argument to consist in the assumption that enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction on it.
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> (Bell 1980:70–1)

In order to overturn *Plessy,* the *Brown* Court needed to demonstrate that separation on the basis of race was inherently discriminatory, regardless of physical facilities; it did that by acknowledging the symbolic message of segregation, its real psychological effects, and the consequences for educational opportunity: "Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of *Plessy v. Ferguson,* this finding [that segregation imparts a message of inferiority to blacks] is amply supported by modern authority" (Bell 1980: 112). Clearly, arguments about the psychology of race can be used for or against the cause of racial justice.

HOME OF THE BRAVE

In the second half of this essay, I want to consider how conceptions of racial subjectivity intersect with national ideology by way of the Hollywood film *Home of the Brave* (1949).[13] I am drawn to film, and this film in particular, as a specimen case for exploring the interdependence of nation and raced subject for several reasons. First, as Michael Rogin writes, "Hollywood's importance in making Americans, in giving those from diverse points of class, ethnic, and geographic origin, a common imagined community, is by now commonplace" (1996:18). Moreover, Hollywood films have typically constituted an imagined community for white immigrant workers by offering them an American identity defined against subjugated African-American and Native American populations (Rogin 1996:14). Rogin argues that we can track the development of American film through four pivotal movies about race: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1902), *Birth of a Nation* (1915), *The Jazz Singer* (1927), and *Gone With The Wind* (1939). These films, which trade in racial stereotypes that grow out of the minstrel tradition, "provide the scaffolding for American film history. They instantiate the

transformative moments in American film—combining box office success, critical recognition of revolutionary significance, formal innovations, and shifts in the cinematic mode of production" (1996:18). Although Hollywood might be criticized more obviously for ignoring African-Americans, its landmark films have returned to the repressed origins of American freedom in slavery. Films about race are, then, central rather than incidental to Hollywood's discourse on national identity and its rise as a cultural institution. After World War II, Hollywood films such as *Home of the Brave* began to attack the casual, yet purposeful, race prejudice that characterizes these four seminal films. But, as Rogin notes, these later films "bore an unacknowledged indebtedness to the tradition they wanted to repudiate" (1996:22).

A second attraction to film is that it provides a nexus of Fanonian and psychoanalytic theory. In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon emphasizes a schema of the scopic regime that constitutes racial difference; this attention to "looking relations" coincides with the vocabulary and preoccupations of feminist film theory which has focused on the role of the gaze in constructing femininity.[14] If racial and gender difference are constructed through scopic regimes that align blacks and women with the body and with sexuality, then this common ground might provide a site for reconfiguring psychoanalytic theory.

Third, *Home of the Brave* represents psychoanalysis diegetically, that is, on the level of plot. It is a story about a black soldier during World War II who suffers a sort of shell shock and must be cured through psychoanalytic therapy. In the course of the therapy, the psychiatrist "discovers" that the soldier's symptoms stem from a racial inferiority complex rather than the horrors of war. The doctor attempts to "cure" the soldier of *his* race complex, thereby locating the problem of American racism in the African-American subject. This filmic representation provides us with an opportunity not only to use psychoanalytic theory to explore the film's construction of racial identity, but also to examine its explicit representation of psychoanalysis as a mechanism of assimilation and suppression.

Fourth, *Home of the Brave* belongs to a string of post-World War II films preoccupied with redefining American masculinity in the wake of the historical trauma of the war. In fact, the film represents at least three aspects of its historical moment. Its rhetoric about the nature of bravery, masculinity, and sacrifice indicates its location in a discursive field in which, as Kaja Silverman argues, America was attempting to reconsolidate an ideology of masculinity and citizenship in the wake of the disillusionment caused by World War II. Its representation of psychiatry indicates that notions of psychology had disseminated sufficiently to be invoked by various popular and civic discourses. Its attempt to foster racial tolerance marks new sensitivity to national prejudice. I want to consider these themes of masculinity, race, and psychoanalysis, in the context of a recent critical text that brings together theories of ideology and psychoanalysis, namely, Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*. This context will provide me with a theoretical framework for analyzing the

relationship between masculinity, psychoanalysis, and national ideology; but because Silverman does not consider race as an aspect of male subjectivity, it also provides me with an opportunity to contribute to revising feminist psychoanalytic theory to account for race. I argue that psychoanalytic theory can productively explore the relationship between male subjectivity and national ideologies of race (as long as we account for its past omissions of race as a factor of identity-formation), but that *Home of the Brave* instead invokes a popular version of the talking cure in order to unhinge politics and identity.

In *Male Subjectivity at the Margins,* Silverman explores a series of films made in Hollywood between 1944 and 1947 that, she argues, attest to the "crisis of male subjectivity" brought about by World War II. In films such as *The Guilt of Janet Ames* and *The Best Years of Our Lives,* the hero returns from the war "with a physical or psychic wound which marks him as somehow deficient" (1992: 53). These post-World War II films depart from popular culture's traditional representation of a sufficient masculinity by revealing rather than concealing the male subject's castration. By "attest[ing] with unusual candor to the castrations through which the male subject is constituted," these films indicate that the "historical trauma" of World War II disrupts a collective ideological belief in the "dominant fiction" of normative masculinity. This moment of "ideological fatigue"—as Silverman terms it—illustrates that America's national ideology is closely tied to the terms of normative masculinity which, by aligning penis and phallus, "solicits our faith above all else in the unity of the family and the adequacy of the male subject" (1992:15–16). Ideologies of class, race, ethnicity, and nation "articulat[e] themselves in relation" to these privileged terms of the family and the phallus. Masculinity is thus "a crucial site" for renegotiating the set of images that constitutes our ideological reality (1992:2).

Silverman's claim that national ideology and masculine subjectivity are mutually constitutive marries Althusserian theories of ideological interpellation to psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity. In other words, she links historical materialism and psychoanalysis. I am particularly interested in this approach because it engages psychoanalytic theory for political and historically contextualized analysis. According to this model, masculine sufficiency—though sanctioned by the symbolic order—is continually besieged by material and political conditions such as sexual, economic, and racial oppression, as well as by traumatic historical events such as World War II (1992:52). Silverman discusses the implications of this post-World War II failure of belief in phallic sufficiency for ideologies of gender and the family, but does not probe its implications for ideologies of race. Though classic masculinity covers over lack in the male by equating the penis with the phallus and, usually, by projecting lack onto the female—as indeed other film theorists such as Laura Mulvey have also argued—surely this sufficient masculinity is reserved for white males. Moreover, our culture's valorization of whiteness endows it with compensatory capabilities similar to those of the penis so that the white subject— whether masculine or feminine—can lay claim to fictions of racial superiority

and actual benefits of racial privilege to cover over subjective lack. In this sense, whiteness is aligned with the phallus as the symbolic sign of plenitude. Thus, while all subjects are constituted by primary lack, white subjects nevertheless possess social power that blacks and other minorities do not. My question is, how is this moment of "ideological fatigue," or loss of collective belief in phallic sufficiency, represented in relation to racial difference?

Set in the South Pacific during World War II, *Home of the Brave* (based on a play by Arthur Laurents and directed by Mark Robson, in consultation with Stanley Kramer) focuses on the sacrifices made by five American soldiers—four white and one black—who execute a dangerous reconnaissance mission. The white soldiers in *Home of the Brave* incur emasculating wounds as a direct result of the war: one is killed; one loses his right arm and his wife. But the wounds of the lone black soldier in the film are *psychosomatic*. His ostensible war injuries—partial paralysis and amnesia—turn out to be hysterical expressions of his own pathological psyche that became diseased with a racial inferiority complex long before the war. Private Peter Moss, or "Mossy" (the black soldier, played by James Edwards), volunteers for a dangerous mission to map an island occupied by the Japanese. Three white soldiers reluctantly volunteer to perform the mission with Mossy and their commanding officer; these include an old high-school pal of Mossy's named "Finch," played by Lloyd Bridges; T.J.Everitt, a racial bigot who taunts Mossy throughout; and Mingo, whose character remains emotionally detached until near the end. Though Mossy dispatches Japanese attackers with aplomb, he is easily shaken by every one of T.J.'s slurs. Bridges's character, Finch, repeatedly comes to his rescue, acting in an almost paternal role. He tells T.J. to shut up and soothes Mossy's hurt feelings. But then, in the heat of battle, Finch lets slip a racial epithet. Actually, he calls Mossy a "yellow-bellied ni…t-wit." But both Mossy and the audience know that he had started to say "yellow-bellied nigger." Mossy feels betrayed and responds with anger, but Bridges's character is almost immediately shot by a Japanese soldier and Mossy must leave him behind in order to save the maps. Unable to help Finch, Mossy is wracked with guilt and a sense of impotence as he hears Finch scream, presumably while being tortured by the Japanese. Finch eventually crawls back to camp, only to die in Mossy's arms. At this moment, Mossy develops paralysis from the waist down and amnesia.

Once rescued from the island and returned to the South Pacific army base from which the group started, Mossy undergoes a drug-enhanced course of psychotherapy—termed "narcosynthesis"—that is administered by an army psychiatrist known only as "the Doc." The drug, a Hollywood device akin to truth serum, makes Mossy relive the events leading up to the traumatic shock that caused his paralysis and amnesia. In the psychiatrist's words, he must "return to the scene of the crime." If there is any doubt that—narcosynthesis injections not withstanding—the Doc is practicing psychoanalysis, we can consider that he is coded Jewish and that Mossy says to his fellow soldiers that the injections gave way to treatment sessions in which he

and the Doc "only talked." Even the Doc's repeated lamentations that he wished he and Mossy had more time to continue the talking treatment signal that the Doc is administering "the talking cure."

Though Mossy relives the primal scene of his friend's death and the onset of his own paralysis, he is "cured" only when the psychiatrist interprets the remembered events for him. The Doc explains that Mossy's symptoms stem not simply from guilt over leaving Finch behind, as Mossy suspects, but rather from a sense of shame that his leaving Finch and the relief he feels for surviving the mission confirm his racial difference. In other words, Mossy believes—or so the Doc tells him—that a white soldier wouldn't have reacted similarly, wouldn't have felt relieved, as Mossy was, that his own life had been spared. The psychiatrist relieves Mossy of this emotional burden by insisting that every man is glad he isn't the one to die, and so Mossy is no different from any other soldier —that is, no different from white soldiers. When Mossy persists in saying that he is different from the other men because he's black, referring more to his experience of racism than to any essential difference, the Doc says: "There, that sensitivity, that's the disease you have." He proceeds to explain that Mossy needs to be cured of *his* racial sensitivities, his inability to judge men in a colorblind fashion, or "this could happen again, or something worse." Although the film suggests that American society bears some responsibility for Mossy's psychic wounds, the denouement ultimately locates the problem of racism within the black, male psyche itself. *Home of the Brave* uses the scene of psychoanalytic therapy not for understanding the unconscious of an African-American man, but for projecting white society's fantasies onto the black man via the paternalistically benign voice of medical authority.

The film's proclaimed antiracist message that all men are equal—or, as the "cured" Mossy says at the end, "We're all different, but underneath we're all guys"—aligns it with other Hollywood films of the era (such as *Imitation of Life*) that profess to challenge racist assumptions only to reinscribe them. The black man's justifiably angry response to racism is, in this film, contained by representing it as a self-destructive, even auto-immune, disease that leaves him in infantile and impotent confusion (Mossy's expressions throughout the film are pretty much limited to facial twitches that indicate his overwrought nervous frustration and grateful, puppy-dog gazes toward his white protectors: Finch, the Doc, and a third soldier, Mingo). The film suggests repeatedly that it is not a lack of educational, employment, and social opportunities that circumscribes Mossy's life (Mossy and Finch attended an integrated high school; the psychiatrist suggests that racism is limited to attitudes and doesn't affect policies; Mingo promises to open a bar and restaurant with Mossy as co-owner), but rather the deplorable fact that he feels interpellated by name-calling bigots like T.J. By scapegoating T.J. as the racist, the film says, in effect, sure there are a few bigots, but we know they're wrong, so don't let them bother you. In accordance with America's ideology of individualism, the film acknowledges the existence of racist individuals, but not the systemic racism of American society.

The unsettling end of the scene of psychoanalysis between Peter Moss and the psychiatrist illustrates one way that the film unravels its own rhetoric of equality and self-esteem for blacks. Though Mossy (now called by his first name, Peter) accepts on an intellectual level the Doc's word that he is equal to whites, he says he does not know it in his heart. Thus, he is not cured of his lack of self-esteem, and he continues to believe that he cannot walk. In a last ditch effort to effect a cure, the Doc calls him a "yellow-bellied nigger." This so enrages Mossy that he staggers out of bed in order to attack the doctor. When he reaches the Doc, he realizes he is cured and sinks gratefully into the Doc's arms. The Doc's final clinical technique (shouting racial epithets) undercuts his previous exhortations that Peter must cease to heed name-calling racists. Yet, in the film's terms, the Doc resorts to enacting this very dynamic, to playing the part of the racist, for Mossy's own good. The trick of calling Mossy by the n-word in order to rouse his wilted manhood wouldn't have worked if Mossy did not still feel interpellated by the label and its ideological implications. He can be cured of his psychosomatic injuries, as long as he accepts his place of lack or castration within the social order.

How does the black soldier's disfigurement in *Home of the Brave* compare with the white veteran's symbolic castration? To answer this question I would like to consider a character I have left aside until now. The fifth man on the mission (in addition to Mossy, Finch, T.J., and the Major) is Mingo, coded a "non-racist" like Finch, who gets shot in the right arm. In addition to losing his arm, which is amputated when the party returns to base, Mingo has already lost his wife, who left him while he was serving overseas. In the off-camera character of Mingo's wife—she sends him poems testifying to her fidelity and then leaves him with a "Dear John" letter—we see the fulfillment of Silverman's observation that these post-World War II films often attribute "male insufficiency not only to the war, but to the collapse of traditional gender divisions in the home…a collapse for which it holds the female subject responsible" (1992:53). The wife is a hypocrite who, as Mingo says, doesn't live up to the promise of her own poems. By the film's end, Mossy will take up the wife's position in relation to Mingo in an interracial, homoerotic suturing of the wounds of war.

The film's final scene brings together—and draws parallels between—the physically damaged Mingo and Mossy, now cured of paralysis and amnesia, but not of being black. In this scene, Mossy and Mingo await the transport that will begin their journey back to the States. T.J. manages to make one more unthinking, egregious racial slur and to remind Mossy that he left Finch behind. At this, Mossy begins to unravel; he buries his head in his hands and moans over and over, "I'm just like the others; I'm just like the others." Mingo steps in to assume Finch's position as Mossy's protector. He sends T.J. away, offers to go into business with Mossy stateside, just as Finch had, and plays Finch's part in an inside joke he and Mossy had shared. Mossy first remains skeptical of Mingo's sincerity, but is finally won over when Mingo compares his armless, wifeless state to Mossy's condition as a black man. They resolve to do well

despite their disabilities: Mingo says he won't let his arm go down the drain for nothing; Mossy replies, "I ain't gonna let me go for nothing." The white man may have been symbolically castrated in the war, but black masculinity is inherently lacking. As they leave the barracks, Mingo has trouble hoisting his duffel bag over his shoulder with one arm. Mossy offers help by quoting a line from Mingo's wife's poem, a poem that Mingo had earlier recited for Mossy. He says, "Hey coward, take my coward's hand." Because Mossy offers help not from a position of masculine sufficiency superior to Mingo's, but rather from the castrated, feminized position of the black man masquerading as the white woman, Mingo can accept assistance without losing face. Mingo accepts help from Mossy although he had previously rejected T.J.'s offer to light a cigarette for him, because T.J. had assumed an air of smug superiority and pity.

The film gestures toward an acknowledgment of the psychologically debilitating effects of material and ideological discrimination, but winds up mainly pathologizing the victim. If this is yet another example of how popular discourses cast African-American responses to racism as pathological, what have we learned about the relationship between racial subjects and national ideology, or the relationship between race and psychoanalytic theory? We can modify Silverman's thesis that many post-World War II films highlight rather than conceal the male subject's castration, and so demonstrate a loss of collective belief in phallic sufficiency. Although the white male subject in *Home of the Brave* suffers unrecoverable loss during the war, he nevertheless remains recognizably "masculine" in relation to the black man. Though he is not a romantic war hero, Mingo possesses a stoicism and emotional toughness that Mossy lacks. In effect, Mingo has been castrated by the war, while Mossy is always-already castrated. Mingo's racial superiority compensates for his—and the audience's—loss of belief in masculine sufficiency Mingo's protective chaperoning of Mossy's return to the States suggests that the white man may not be omnipotent, but he can still take care of the women, children, and blacks. In this way, the film simultaneously acknowledges and sutures over the historic traumas of World War II and of America's legacy of slavery—segregation. Normative masculinity, and the national ideology which depends on it, cannot be deconstructed apart from factors of racial difference.

NOTES

1 Stuart Hall also disagrees that Fanon's work becomes progressively more political as it moves away from psychoanalysis (1996:17). For an early defense of why Fanon included the psychiatric case studies in *The Wretched of the Earth,* see Gendzier (1974:102–9).

2 Interestingly, theorists writing on the construction of whiteness (primarily in relation to blackness) draw on the psychoanalytic registers of desire and identification even if they do not place themselves explicitly within a psychoanalytic tradition. See for example Lott (1993) and Rogin (1992).

3 Diana Fuss credits Gates with having "done the most to open the flood-gates for poststructuralist Afro-American literary theory" (1989:81).

4 R.Radhakrishnan makes an appeal for the conjoining of ethnic specificity and poststructuralism; focusing on either, he argues, creates an untenable political position:

> The constituency of "the ethnic" occupies quite literally a "pre-post"-erous space where it has to actualize, enfranchise, and empower its own "identity" and coextensively engage in the deconstruction of the very logic of "identity" and its binary and exclusionary politics. Failure to achieve this doubleness can only result in the formation of ethnicity as yet another "identical" and hegemonic structure. The difficult task is to achieve an axial connection between the historico-semantic specificity of "ethnicity" and the "post-historical" politics of racial indeterminacy.
>
> (Radhakrishnan 1990:50)

5 See also hooks (1992). E.Ann Kaplan thoroughly summarizes this critique of feminist film theory and articulates the stakes for a psychoanalytic analysis of race in *Looking for the Other* (l997, especially 99–130).

6 I have argued elsewhere that in *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon demonstrates how to ground psychoanalytic theory in a specific socioeconomic location: see Bergner (1995). I have also made a case at greater length for the relevance of psychoanalytic theory to African-American theory in Bergner (1998).

7 Despite the continuing difficulties of generating dialogue among theorists working in different critical traditions, a number of American theorists of race *are* reconfiguring psychoanalytic theory to interrogate racial subjectivity and a racist social order; Hortense Spillers, Jane Gaines, Stuart Hall, and Claudia Tate are among the most influential.

8 Although we associate the notion of a "culture of poverty" with conservative anti-welfare, anti-affirmative action positions, it actually originated from liberal social scientists who wanted to oppose claims of inborn group inferiority (Thomas and Sillen 1972:68).

9 In an article that expresses her intellectual and emotional debt to Fanon, bell hooks suggests that it can be enabling rather than debilitating to recognize, on an intrapsychic level, the harm caused by oppression:

> I was given by this intellectual parent [Fanon] paradigms that enabled me to understand the many ways in which systems of domination damage the colonized. More than any other thinker, he provided me with a model for insurgent black intellectual life that has shaped my work.
>
> (1996:85)

In fact, hooks laments that Fanon does not put more emphasis on interrogating the individual's personal past; "It is here," she writes, "that his paradigms for healing fall short" (85).

10 For an account of recent developments in "transcultural psychiatry" that attempt both to eliminate racial bias and account for multicultural perspectives, see Kaplan (1997:104–5).

11 See, for example, a *Washington Post* article on responses to Brown University's dormitory dedicated to "students who identify with their African descent, speak an African language, or major solely in Pan-African studies" (Jordan 1995:395).

12 The *Brown* Court cited studies by child psychologist Kenneth Clark as evidence for the psychological damage inflicted by segregation, thus inaugurating a debate about the self-esteem of black children which has not yet subsided. See Abdullah (1988), Gopaul-McNicol (1988), McMillan (1988), Powell-Hopson and Hopson (1988), and Whaley (1993). Clark's famous "doll tests" are, today, generally discredited on statistical grounds (for citation information on the studies that disproved Clark's findings, see Whaley 1993:408). But debates still rage over whether all-black or integrated schools are most conducive to black children's education and self-esteem.

13 For another discussion of *Home of the Brave,* see Kaplan (1997:106–9).

14 For discussions of Fanon's and film theory's focus on scopic regimes that constitute difference, see Bhabha (1983), Gaines (1986), Bergner (1995), Hall (1996) and Kaplan (1997).

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