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THE CANNIBAL TROPE:

A Psychosocial Critique of Psychoanalysis' Colonial Fantasies

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PhD in Psychosocial Studies

2018
Birkbeck,
University of London

To Natalie

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and contributions
from other persons are fully cited and referenced.

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I examine the ambivalent engagement of psychoanalysis with questions of 'race' and racial difference and I argue that there are yet unacknowledged colonial legacies entrenched in psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity. Against post-colonial critiques dismissing psychoanalysis altogether because of its racial assumptions, this project adopts a psychosocial position and raises an epistemological question about the nature and forms of knowledge produced once we acknowledge the intricate, historical relationship between psychoanalysis and coloniality. In particular, I propose that a constructive way into the question of 'race' and psychoanalysis is to systematically trace and contextualise the anachronistic references to internalisation as 'cannibalistic.' As theorised in this work, the cannibal trope belongs to a long historical genealogy tied to the European medieval persecutions against witches eating their new-borns, to anti-Semitic stereotypes against Jews feasting on Christian boys before Easter ('blood libel'), in order to become amalgamated in the European discourse of 'race' and racial difference during the colonisation of the Americas—the word cannibal etymologically derives from the word 'Carib', the native of the Caribbean islands. As a distinct representation of Europe's others, the cannibal trope made its way into literature, anthropology and psychoanalysis and constitutes a symbolic reminder of colonial afterlife.

To formulate psychological development as a process based on 'taking in' social norms, structures and objects, pioneer psychoanalytic figures like Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein relied on the colonial aesthetics of devourment, unwittingly ascribing racial and gendered assumptions to the psychoanalytic subject. Using their works as case studies the thesis then moves on to explore psychoanalysis in British and French colonies. Looking at the case of Géza Róheim, the first anthropologically trained psychoanalyst, as well as the psychiatrist and pioneer post-colonial thinker Frantz Fanon, I show that although the question of cultural difference has been examined by psychoanalysts, without reflecting on the political dynamics of racialised violence and colonial domination, psychoanalysis until the early 1960s, leaves the question of 'race' unresolved.

As repressed components of European culture, colonial tropes are encountered in the margins of major psychoanalytic texts (many of which still used in psychoanalytic and psychodynamic training curriculums). As such they can be methodologically accessed only by paying attention to affects, footnotes, references, metaphors and tropes that drag psychoanalysis out of its apparent timelessness. By focusing on the forms of knowledge contained in the margins, this project uncovers unspoken colonial affects and shows that whilst 'race' has been forced into silence, the references to the cannibal trope help us rewrite psychoanalytic theory by working through the traces of its colonial reminiscences.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, coloniality, race, cannibalism, psychosocial, subjectivity

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 '*Well, how would you know?*' A psychosocial hors d'oeuvre

My relationship with psychoanalysis begins with my experience of being a patient. What brought me to analysis, in the first place, was a general feeling of discomfort and unhappiness emerging from my homosexuality and my difficulties in accepting it. During my earliest sessions, psychoanalysis made me feel angry and confused. The absence of concrete guidelines and norms made me unsettled; what kind of structure was this? Why do I have to be a 'patient,' to *literally wait* in order to experience change? What kind of change comes from waiting? During one of these emotionally challenging and turbulent first sessions, I said to my therapist that I felt she could *never* understand me because she was not gay. I still remember her answer, which seems as entertaining as it seemed seven years ago: 'well, if I were gay, how would you know?'

My first thought was that her bravery and willingness to identify with the gay community seemed so profound, that she must definitely have wanted to help me. As years went by, I gradually began to realise that it was not so much an identification—a statement 'she could be one of us—' but a statement that asked me to consider an *element of doubt* when judging the other's sexuality; an invitation to consider the possibility that one cannot know the other entirely. The major breakthrough that psychoanalysis had brought to my life was to open up a space of curiosity and uncertainty, to help me survive through feelings of anxiety that emerge from not-knowing and not being able to acquire answers with certainty. Moreover, I realised what was at stake when taking refuge in preformulated assumptions about female homosexuality, or other issues and I started exploring my own fantasies about what a gay woman looks like, how her femininity is or should be performed.

A different encounter with psychoanalysis was at the very beginning of this project, in 2014, when I watched a documentary called *Black Psychoanalysts Speak*, which was produced and released by the biggest online psychoanalytic library, *Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing* (pep-web) and featured American

psychoanalysts speaking about challenges of cultural, ethnic and racial difference in analytic training and practice.¹ The film was produced as a continuation of a dialogue between black psychoanalysts in a 2012 conference on black psychoanalysts, organised by the *Institute of Psychoanalytic Training and Research* (IPTAR) in New York. In the film, analysts of colour raised important questions about how racial and ethnic differences can be held accountable within psychoanalytic practice, what kind of challenges they present and whether and how racism is embedded among practitioners and training curriculums. Diversity inside the psychoanalytic institutions and consulting rooms, an analyst named Anton Hart claims in the documentary, is not a matter of ‘competency’—namely, the analyst’s capacity to be able to listen and tolerate otherness without becoming judgmental.² Dealing with diversity is not a skill to be taught, it is the central question of psychoanalysis: how to be ‘radically undefended’ (his words), genuinely open and curious about the experiences and backgrounds the patients bring in the consulting room. As I understood the difference between the two terms, it is a question of whether diversity, in the domain of the psychoanalytic, is preserved as such—a form of natural pluralism, a polyphony in the way bodies can exist, perform and connect—or whether diversity must necessarily come under the sway of political asymmetry: some bodies are victimised, separated, identified, marked and carved through sexism, racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of social violence.

This project was born from my personal, burning question of how psychoanalysis deals with diversity, difference and differentiation. It is a question of how psychoanalysis thinks of otherness, if it does not speak from a position of sameness, but of unknowability. Like my therapist said: how does one know about the other? And what does the erasure of the possibility to not-know the other entirely do? At that time, whilst being preoccupied with questions of diversity, it seemed reasonable to begin by exploring those instances where diversity and differentiation fail: where boundaries collapse, difference dissolves into union and individuality is deprived. I became attracted to concepts of consumption and their theoretical currency, but a major breakthrough came when I watched the 1991 Jonathan Demme film *The Silence of the Lambs*, an extraordinary thriller about monstrosity and transgression.

¹ Basia Winograd, *Black Psychoanalysts Speak* (PEP Video Grants 1(1):1, 2014).

² Winograd.

The film is about a female FBI agent (Clarice Starling) consulting an imprisoned psychiatrist for having eaten one of his patients (Hannibal Lecter) to help her arrest one of his former patients, a serial-killer (Buffalo Bill). In the film, the characters emerge out of messy power and gender relations. The serial-killer, Buffalo Bull murders women to tailor a skin-costume that would suit the female body he wishes to have. As we learn from Hannibal Lecter, his psychiatrist, Buffalo Bill 'is a man at odds with gender identity or sexual identity and his self-presentation is a confused mosaic of signifiers.'³ Buffalo Bill is a monster not only because he murders, neither only because he denounces his masculinity as Judith Halberstam argued, but because his confusion cannot be contained and worked through. His fragmented and undone identity, his unmanaged envy for the female body is projected externally with murderous rage against women and with castrating hatred against his own body. Against this quasi trans-man there is an omnipotent, manipulating monster representing another form of castration threat: the psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter who literally and metaphorically invades his victims' minds. While in prison, he manipulates the FBI agent Clarice Starling interviewing him, he asks about her dreams, her fears and fantasies. Lecter forces her into an analytic relationship and ironically, despite their close relationship she does not get eaten throughout the trilogy—their sexual difference helps her survive. Lecter is 'an unusual threat to society not simply because he murders people and consumes them, but because as a psychiatrist he has access to minds.'⁴ For Halberstam, Lecter is a monster that creates monsters out of his patients 'as an inverted model of his own pathology.'⁵ If Lecter's wish is to consume his patients, Buffalo Bill's is to 'dress in' his victims.⁶ One is incorporating, the other is projecting, and both vacillate between their pathologies and the borders of their masculinities.

I found the film—and Judith Halberstam's analysis of the plot—not flattering for the psychoanalytic relationship. Halberstam's analysis seems to miss a crucial aspect about the film. She writes: '*The Silence of the Lambs* is a horror film that, for once, is not designed to scare women, it scares men instead with the image of a fragmented and fragile masculinity, a male body disowning the penis.'⁷ It

³ Judith Halberstam, "Skinflick: Posthuman Gender in Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*," *Camera Obscura* 9, no. 3 (1991): 41.

⁴ Halberstam, 39.

⁵ Halberstam, 42.

⁶ Halberstam, 42.

⁷ Halberstam, 41.

seems unlikely that the film does not scare women; the female characters are manipulated, tricked, seduced, kidnapped, perpetrated, murdered, skinned, dissected. Clarise Starling is the only female character who mediates between the two violent masculinities, Lecter's and Bill's, subjecting to the manipulation of the one monster and pursuing the other. Halberstam concludes that in the film the horror is psychology:

[A] bad therapeutic relationship, a fine romance between the one who knows and the one who eats, the one who eats and the one who grows skins; the one who castrates and the one who enacts a parody of circumcision. Psychology is no longer an explanation for horror, it generates horror, it finds its most basic fantasies and demands their enactment in the name of transference and truth.⁸

But I would like to add that the horror is also a heteronormative patriarchal psychology and the anxieties of masculinity in the absence of or liminal presence of sexual difference. While Hannibal devours the brains of his (male) patients 'with fava beans and a nice chianti' as he narcissistically declares, he refrains from eating Starling.⁹ Halberstam's point 'Hannibal analyses people to death,' seems to be missing something important about the role of sexual difference in the play—and I would argue in psychoanalysis too.¹⁰

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that something about this horrific portrayal of psychoanalysis in Hollywood triggered me to begin exploring the relationship between those popular fears of being devoured by the analytic relationship and the account of devourment found within psychoanalytic discourse. Exploring the relationship between consumption, transgression and differentiation, the cannibal trope allowed me to open up a space from where to investigate anxieties about otherness, sameness, and bodily boundaries from a psychoanalytic perspective. The cannibal trope soon became an opaque shibboleth that I could not decode, but had nonetheless put words, not meaning, to my frustration. Cannibalism remained for me an empty signifier, which was invested with too much meaning at the same time. On the one hand, the cannibal trope stood as a grotesque imagery of undifferentiation, of a threatening, pervasive, homosexual masculinity, of the proximity of the

⁸ Halberstam, 47.

⁹ Jonathan Demme, *The Silence of the Lambs*, Horror (Orion Pictures, 1991).

¹⁰ Halberstam, "Skinflick: Posthuman Gender in Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*," 44.

analytic relationship and so on. On the other, it felt like a concept without an opposite and hence, impossible to be defined—let alone resisted. In Western epistemology concepts are traditionally defined in relation to something else. If cannibalism symbolises an act of a human eating another human, then is withdrawal from the act the only possibility of negating cannibalism? The film implied that sexual difference could be a place from where to think of the cannibal trope and difference; like the vital distance between Hannibal Lecter and Clarise Starling—a relationship, otherwise immersed into psychological violence and coercion.

Through my personal clinical experience as a psychoanalytic patient, psychoanalysis seemed to manage the unique tension of allowing difference without consuming it; containing and undoing the subject, dissolving and re-stitching identity together, like Buffalo Bill's skin-suit, but without the murderous impulse. Psychoanalysis for me was, if you like, a different form of cannibalism; a new form of eating that is not done to kill and annihilate, but to nurture, to develop and to enjoy. It was finding the possibility of this new form of subjectivity that motivated me personally throughout this project and led me, eventually, to question the content of psychoanalytic theory, its history and the discipline's own fantasies about consuming others. The cannibal trope unexpectedly had cropped into as a theme that would offer a useful angle into these questions. In the documentary *Black Psychoanalysts Speak*, I was more than delighted to hear an American psychoanalyst, Dorothy Holmes, juxtaposing to the imaginary of cannibalism a less gruesome, more enjoyable culinary imaginary of the process of psychoanalysis:

*'The implications [...] of psychoanalysis, and another reason why as a black person—and just as a person—I find it so meaningful, is because it is essentially radical. The whole purpose of psychoanalysis is to stir the pot, not by actually turning up the heat so high. It's more like slowly. It's more like when you prepare a stew. Heat is being applied, but rather gently, to loosen up the tough fibres and to make the person more pliable, more supple, more flexible, more agile, and more delicious.'*¹¹

¹¹ Winograd, *Black Psychoanalysts Speak*.

1.2 Introduction: Critiquing Psychoanalysis

In psychoanalysis, there is a sense that sexuality is the only marker of difference inscribed on the body. On the one hand, sexuality seems indeed to be the primary driving force of individuals; it is a source of creativity, pleasure, confusion, experimentation, connection and communication. On the other hand, the diffusion of psychoanalysis outside Europe, with the simultaneous explosive growth of the need for psychoanalytic or psychoanalytically informed treatments amongst marginalised ethnic communities seems to suggest that it is more appropriate than ever to raise questions about the role of race and racial difference in psychoanalysis. Are unconscious structures universally shared or do they differ among ethnic groups? How does cultural difference inform masculinity and femininity and their unconscious fantasies? Is race and experiences of racialisation important in psychoanalytic practice? Are we raced subjects and how can we account for this, psychoanalytically? When posing these questions in contemporary psychoanalytic practice and psychodynamic training, one can be overwhelmed by a series of resistances, and interpretations. In a discipline where everything can be an utterance, critique needs to come well-thought through and substantiated.

While the need for a radical reformulation of the psychoanalytic orthodoxies might seem a relevant and exigent claim, one would be forgiven for arguing that the main radicalism of psychoanalysis is precisely its refusal to uncontestedly change. A great breakthrough of psychoanalysis relies on its stability and integrity, on the perseverance of a cure through speech, which welcomes repetitive returns to worn-out narratives of one's self, and maintains an unrushed, time-consuming rhythm. It is the consulting room where pauses, silences and inertia are allowed to occur. And while during the past century the Western world has frantically changed and transitioned through different political regimes—from the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the emergence of nation-states, to the murderous power of totalitarianism, the Cold War, the fall of communism and the contemporary neoliberal enterprise—there is a sense that the practice of psychoanalysis has stubbornly, and rightly so, not followed.

This is not to say, however, that there have not been significant debates within the institutes of psychoanalysis advocating for the reconsideration of, and shift in, traditional views on for instance, female sexuality and homosexuality, like the

'great debate' of the 1920s and 1930s, and the proliferation of feminist critiques towards psychoanalysis in the 1970s. Most recently, criticisms sprang from the space of post-colonial studies which during the 1990s engaged in meticulous and powerful reviews of the ways the psychoanalytic subject entertains, as one critic put it, 'equation of an unmarked whiteness with its norm of subjectivity',¹² which is afforded at the cost of silencing the racial, female other. What is at stake in these arguments is the question of whether and how race, as a socially constructed category, is involved in the theorisation of psychic life, and how the representations of the psychoanalytic subject reiterate, challenge or bypass these ethnic and racial social distinctions. In other words, how does psychoanalysis approach the question of race, not as a biological difference, but as Stuart Hall put it as a 'discursive regime' whose 'elements function *discursively* which enables it to have "real effects"?'¹³ If race and racism come to life through discourses, through systems of symbolic representation, did psychoanalysis partake in these discourses as a discipline; i.e. was it formed and shaped through hegemonic ideas about race, and does it have to offer a different viewpoint, a new perspective on these discursively constructed prejudices? These are the sets of questions that come to life in the interdisciplinary dialogue between post-colonial theory and psychoanalysis.

Nevertheless, to argue, as many critics have done, that the 'conceit of whiteness',¹⁴ or the 'unacknowledged whiteness'¹⁵ of the imagined psychoanalytic subject must be examined through the same epistemological tools that have explored and deconstructed Western literature and film, psychology, anthropology and so on, is an argument that does no favours to post-colonial theory. We must avoid the error of lumping together European epistemes, with different histories and genealogies, in the search for diversity and pluralism, or we merely—and paradoxically—reiterate the logistics and effects of the same power relations we are trying to critique. As Jacqueline Rose argued, in her response to feminist criticisms about psychoanalysis as apolitical, it is important to avoid the fallacy of a pure, unproblematic and 'wholly satisfactory' theory for the subject and maintain a relation of pragmatism as to what psychoanalysis can and cannot

¹⁴ Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, "The Primitive as Analyst: Postcolonial Feminism's Access to Psychoanalysis," *Cultural Critique*, University of Minnesota Press, 28 (1994): 178.

¹⁵ Jean Walton, "Re-Placing Race in (White) Psychoanalytic Discourse: Founding Narratives of Feminism," *Critical Inquiry* 21, no. 4 (1995): 775–804.

offer, while simultaneously maintaining its status as a therapeutic practice.¹⁶ Paradoxically, the critical statements about how the psychoanalytic subject is implicitly white and male, whose agency is built upon the silencing of the black woman, only reaffirm the racial asymmetries that they seek to undo. The work of Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks is a good example of this. In her critique of psychoanalysis, Crooks neglects to account for its foundational premise: the unconscious as the agency which aborts any attempts at foreclosing identity. Crooks believes that it is impossible to use ‘psychoanalysis (or ethnopsychology) to *describe* the subproletariat woman as an already constituted, thus wholly accessible subject.’¹⁷ In this claim lies the paradox which undermines Crooks’ argument: namely that from a psychoanalytic point of view such an account of an ‘already constituted, thus wholly accessible subject’ is an impossibility and a fantasy. I will be arguing that we need to maintain the radical openness of psychoanalysis, alongside the fact that it cannot provide a reading of racial difference that will ultimately override and shut down racism. This does not mean that I endorse the perspective that racism and racial discriminations are aspects of everyday reality that one should ensconce themselves with or give up fighting against. But rather, what I am suggesting is to attune to the fact that diversity is uncomfortable, and racism—as a set of certainties and prejudices—shuts down this discomfort by claiming to know the other. What we need to do is to hold on to the traces of racist imageries—those moments that foreclose or deny unknowingness - within psychoanalysis and listen to what kind of discomfort they are trying to disclose.

1.3 The Cannibal Trope as a Psychosocial Critique of Psychoanalysis

This project seeks to explore these questions around otherness and race by historicising, exploring and theorising the imagery of cannibalism within

¹⁶ Jacqueline Rose, “Femininity and Its Discontents,” *Feminist Review*, Palgrave Macmillan Journals, 80, no. Reflections on 25 Years (2005): 24–43.

¹⁷ Seshadri-Crooks, “The Primitive as Analyst: Postcolonial Feminism’s Access to Psychoanalysis,” 176.

psychoanalysis; namely whether and how fantasies about threatening and devouring others fostered through colonial representation, shaped psychoanalytic theory, from its emergence as a form of therapy and theory about the subject, until the decolonisation of the non-European world. It is premised on the assumption that human-flesh consumption is an unexplored racialised and sexualised trope that dominates the European imagery since the Ancient Greco-Roman traditions. However, cannibalism as a concept, I argue is a predominantly modern term; it becomes a major trope for othering during the historical processes of European colonialism. Hence, cannibalism became a tool for European domination through racial and sexual objectification. The project examines how this imagery gets played out in psychoanalysis, as a discourse premised on the study of taboos, personal, social and sexual boundaries. More precisely, I look at the theories of four psychoanalysts and psychoanalytically-informed theorists—Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Géza Róheim and Frantz Fanon—to investigate the place of the imagery of cannibalism in their works. These four cases are used to examine why and how the cannibal trope as a ‘watchword’—I am borrowing this term from Celia Brickman¹⁸—for racial and sexual othering enters their works, and what are the effects from this uncomfortable displacement. The idea of tracing how a stereotype about the non-European is dislocated in a predominantly European discourse of psychic life offers a way into the theoretical disjunctions previously outlined: namely the uncomfortable or unsettling place in which psychoanalysis and the social meet. Therefore, this project asks: what kind of knowledge does the cannibal trope acquire, produce and expose within the domain of the psychoanalytic? What does it do to psychoanalytic theory and what does psychoanalytic theory do to the imagery of the non-European as a cannibal?

Broadly speaking my aim is to investigate the various modalities through which psychoanalysis participated in the knowledge of the other as a cannibal, and through this process to examine the place of diversity and difference within psychoanalysis. This project could be read as an intellectual exercise on the tension between psychoanalysis and colonialism: how psychoanalysis was formed by colonialism through the imagery of the cannibal trope and how it contributed to the decolonisation of Western thinking. It resists, therefore, considering psychoanalysis merely as an object of study—a discourse that can be dissected, deconstructed and criticised—but looks at it as a discipline with

¹⁸ Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind*.

an inner, unconscious life and fantasies; one which has participated in the deconstruction and decolonisation of the European subject, re-articulating and re-signifying not only the concept of 'subject' but of the very notion of *doing* decolonisation and performing anti-colonial resistance, as well.

In this regard, at first sight it seems paradoxical or unconventional to develop this line of questioning through what I call the 'cannibal trope.' Psychoanalysis and cannibalism have very little—if anything—in common: psychoanalysis is one of the most prominent analytical tools and forms of knowledge about the subject, whilst cannibalism is an outdated, old-fashioned and repugnant idea. After all, is it really legitimate, politically correct or even plausible to draw on the gruesome myth of cannibalism, when the very effects of the colonial infrastructure were literally the 'cannibalisation' and elimination of most Aboriginal cultures around the globe? In a rather provocative way one could also ask: what is actually wrong with cannibalism? Or in a psychoanalytically-motivated fashion one would rephrase the question in the following way: what is at stake in either the fantasy of or the abhorrence and distaste surrounding cannibalism? I argue that it is precisely in these tensions that cannibalism meets psychoanalysis: *in-between* the colonised and the coloniser, in the space between fantasy and fear, cannibalism can lead us, in a rather unique way, to a critique of psychoanalysis' own fantasies about otherness.

Furthermore, the pairing of psychoanalysis and cannibalism to open up a space to critique psychoanalysis *and* use psychoanalysis as the tool of the critique is not unique. Among recent literature, the work of Celia Brickman, an American psychotherapist, sits well with this project. Brickman traces the racial configurations embedded in the discourse of 'primitivity' as they enter Freudian psychoanalysis. Primitivity, as Brickman shows, is associated with the 'earliest often repressed stages of psychic development,'¹⁹ marking an essentially racialised stage of psychosexual development. As a racial metaphor it performs as a nodal point within the psychoanalytic text which exposes how psychoanalysis has been actively implicated in fantasies about otherness. As previously mentioned, Brickman thinks of primitivity as a 'watchword,' which once followed, contextualised and historicised in the form of a genealogy of knowledge exposes how race as an ideology haunts Freudian psychoanalysis.²⁰

¹⁹ Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind*, 4.

²⁰ Brickman, 5.

The purpose of bringing together cannibalism and psychoanalysis then, is not made to advance any claims to provocative radicalism or to forced originality, but because there seems to be a substantial need for further psychoanalytic and psychosocial research on marginalised, racial and gendered imageries, which are sources of embarrassment and discomfort for the modern reader. These displacements or cacophonies, these incongruous tropes, like cannibalism or primitivity, which seem ‘out of place,’ are also what mark this project as fundamentally a psychosocial one.²¹

The purpose of this project, therefore, is to use this marginal space to explore an epistemological and theoretical issue, namely the relation between psychoanalysis and colonialism, which can be addressed in a unique way through the study of the cannibal trope. This does not mean however, that I am using the case studies to make a political claim about psychoanalysis and its anti-colonial resistance. I do not turn to these four case studies, three psychoanalysts (Freud, Klein, Róheim) and one psychoanalytically-informed psychiatrist (Fanon), to consider and explore whether and how the form of subjectivity that psychoanalysis had to offer is useful for anti-colonial or post-colonial politics—there is a plethora of scholarship that acknowledges this.²² Rather, my aim is by exploring the interplay between psychoanalysis and the cannibal trope to consider whether and how colonial fantasies have shaped and informed the theorisation of the psychoanalytic subject.

1.4 Inside, Outside, Beyond and in-Between: on Psychosocial Method

This thesis is a psychosocial critique of psychoanalysis, in the sense that it advocates a non-disciplinary or a ‘transdisciplinary space,’ a rather ambiguous arena which requires some unpacking. To begin with, there is a debate about

²¹ Lisa Baraitser, *Enduring Time* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 23–28.

²² Homi K. Bhabha, “The Other Question: Homi K. Bhabha Reconsiders the Stereotype and Colonial Discourse,” *Screen* 24, no. 6 (1983): 18–36; Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993); Derek Hook, *A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial: The Mind of Apartheid* (London and New York: Psychology Press, 2012).

whether the psychosocial is a disciplinary space at all. Psychosocial studies are not formulated like other traditional disciplines which delineate their boundaries either through exclusion or opposition, creating therefore essential divisions between inside and outside of the discipline. The psychosocial negates this logic. Moreover, and yet more confusingly, it is not formulated by a sociological approach to psychology, nor from a psychological view towards the social. Rather, the psychosocial emerges from the claim that any distinction between the two is impossible. Frosh and Baraitser have stressed the interconnectedness between the inside and the outside, the psychic and the social, through the visualisation of the Moebius strip—where the question of perspective becomes one of tactics: one can choose which aspect of this unbreakable continuity to examine, but one can never entirely study it in isolation.²³ Thought this way, the psychosocial space has no logical beginning or point of departure. This does not mean, further, that the psychosocial makes absolutist claims and statements for the transparency of phenomena, structures and objects, hallucinating that they can be studied in their entirety. The psychosocial is not about illusions of wholeness and the avoidance of acknowledging a fundamental incompleteness. Rather, it must be remembered that the psychosocial is a space, which comes to life once the cracks, ruptures, limitations and margins of master discourses are acknowledged; that opens us ‘to experiences and realities that usually escape established disciplines and discourses through which we usually seek to know the world.’²⁴

Broadly speaking, questions of a psychosocial perspective emerge counter-intuitively. This means that the psychosocial deals with concepts which seem fundamentally ‘anachronistic,’ outdated, out of place and ‘embarrassing.’²⁵ Baraitser theorised the psychosocial as a ‘temporal drag,’ in the sense that it emerges out of concepts that carry a particular affect and radiate embarrassment that begs us to leave them behind, when actually they signify moments of disjuncture; namely, points where the past uneasily survives in the present. Among these embarrassing concepts the cannibal trope rightly claims a position. The cannibal trope in this project marks a *return*, as Baraitser puts it, that ‘drags

²³ Stephen Frosh and Lisa Baraitser, “Psychoanalysis and Psychosocial Studies,” *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society* 13 (2008): 349.

²⁴ Magda Schmukalla, “Artistic Ruptures and Their ‘communist’ Ghosts: On the Post-Communist Condition as Threshold Experience in Art from and in Eastern Europe” (University of London, 2017), 19.

²⁵ Lisa Baraitser, “Temporal Drag: Transdisciplinarity and the ‘Case’ of Psychosocial Studies,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 32, no. 5–6 (2015): 210.

a discipline back to out of date.²⁶ For the purposes of this project, the traces of cannibalistic imagery as a colonial logic mar the psychoanalytic discourse, since they represent reminiscences not only of the exploitation of the non-Western world by a constellation of political, financial and psychological oppression, but also of the organic connection between psychoanalysis and colonialism. The cannibal trope embedded in psychoanalysis, thus, creates a sense of discomfort in the contemporary reader of psychoanalysis, who either resorts to an elective reading of psychoanalysis (the cannibal trope is left behind, forgotten, ignored), or inspires a political, anti-colonial critique of the discipline as a whole (as the post-colonial approach would imply). Drawing on the cannibal trope as a psychosocial case, I am suggesting a third option: staying with the discomfort and the embarrassment and exploring the kind of contents and intersections the cannibal trope seems to conceal.

What is more, the psychosocial critique of psychoanalysis requests that it is a particular form of psychoanalysis—historically situated in the period of colonialism—that comes under scrutiny. As a psychosocial case, this project looks at how ‘colonial psychoanalysis’ can become reprinted precisely through what makes it fall out of place now. In other words, an unorthodox temporality is formulated; one which is situated in the present, and looks at the psychoanalytic disciplinary past, through the discomfort that certain traces of that psychoanalytic past create in the present. What I am hinting at, is Freud’s concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, according to which the psychosocial case claims to access the discomfort of the cannibal trope as an effect that is deferred; that acquires meaning at a different temporality than the one in which it originally emerged. It is perhaps the same point André Green was making, when in a 1972 issue of the French Psychoanalytic Association journal, dedicated to the fate of cannibalism (*Destins du Cannibalism*), he referred to the ‘paradox of cannibalism,’ that ‘while anthropophagy was disappearing amongst the cultures

which practised it, our culture’s interest in the phenomenon continued to grow.’²⁷ What is it that made French psychoanalysts eager to explore the fate of cannibalism—of a phenomenon whose talk and fantasy had already disappeared

²⁶ Baraitser, 209.

²⁷ André Green, “Cannibalisme: Réalité Ou Fantasma Agi?,” *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* 6 (1972): 27–52. My translation

by 1972 (as I show in Chapter Two)—if not the psychoanalytic fascination with whatever is endangered by the passage of time? This fascination is not a form of fetish with the past and the outdated, but perhaps it springs from the acknowledgment that when cannibals are not put to rest, they return to haunt.

Having said this, there is one more point that needs to be raised in this brief exercise on the ontology of the psychosocial—if these two terms can hold together. And this is the question of what kind of work the psychosocial method, which is being at used in this project, entails. Retrospectively reflecting on the process, tracing the cannibal trope within each of the four case studies explored, technically means navigating endlessly in psychoanalytic texts seeking for marginal, liminal and repressed images. Being cautious about not imposing assumptions about colonialism on the psychoanalytic texts, I have strictly followed explicit references to the cannibal trope tracing their role and impact within the text. My main aim has been to understand what is it that these references do to the theory and to the text itself. Additionally, in the four case studies I have provided extensive historical backgrounds to explain how the imagery of the cannibal trope has reached each one of the theorists. Moreover, where appropriate I have situated the texts historically, among social phenomena and movements that might link back to the concept of cannibalism. Contextualisation allowed me to see that some authors used the cannibal trope as a response to a particular reality and to show that the cannibal trope has not been part of one coherent discourse on cannibalism, but rather it emerges in the form of devouring mothers, greedy children, Aboriginal tribes setting up a human feast.

Apart from Chapter One which offers a systematic historical exploration of the cannibal trope and its role within colonial representation, the chapters share a similar structure and flow. They can be read as episodes, separate cases that highlight the ways the cannibal trope is embedded within psychoanalysis as a reminder of the historical context within which it emerged, and tensions this brings into the psychoanalytic thinking of racial difference. They can also be read as cases that together build up an argument about how psychoanalysis was informed by colonialism and how as a discourse about the subject it created post-colonial possibilities.

1.5 Chapter Outline

This thesis is comprised of six chapters, all of which deal with parts of the argument I adumbrated above. The next chapter is a genealogy of the cannibal trope in Western, modern thought. To navigate around such an immense task, the chapter places some iconic works of literature alongside post-colonial anthropological sources to unmask how a dominant and persistent form of representation among the European Empires was the black indigenous as a cannibal. More precisely, the chapter departs from the distinction between anthropophagy, meaning the practice of eating human flesh as a practice of cultural rituals (e.g. mortuary), and cannibalism, as a European fantasy about a devouring other. It follows this fantasy from the Ancient Greek tradition, to the persecutions of witches and Jews in the Middle Ages to the first colonial encounters of the Spanish and Portuguese Empires in the Caribbean and the role of cannibalism in the construction of concepts of savagery that radically differentiated Europeans from the indigenous and was used to justify massacres. However, what this exteriorisation of cannibalism demonstrated was that oppression, erasure, annihilation of cultural difference were primary motives of colonialism, alongside financial and political exploitation. This would then lead to the question of whether cannibals would only lie outside the boundaries of Europe and to the establishing of links with anti-Semitic myths and prejudices, like those of blood libel and ritual murder. The chapter also looks at the imagery of the cannibal trope as it re-emerged in the late 18th century and early 19th century in the context of European racism and the scientific discipline of Victorian anthropology.

This post-colonial critique of colonial representations is used to construct a framework for the place of cannibalism—which in the European imagery was detected always on the margins—and which becomes the point from which this thesis departs. What is more, the connection between racism and anti-Semitism is important, because it introduces race and racial difference as not necessarily a marker of blackness (a distinction that becomes challenged by Fanon, as we will see in chapter six). What this genealogy exposes, thus, is that the fear of difference and diversity is not a recent phenomenon. Instead, it is rooted in the structure of whiteness and has allowed racial inequalities to be perpetuated.

The third chapter looks at the work of Sigmund Freud, not just because he was the

founder of psychoanalysis, but also because he bolstered psychoanalytic insights by drawing on disciplines like anthropology and biology, opening a constructive dialogue about the relation of the subject and the social. However, the disciplines Freud drew on concealed a racist ideology constructed upon an evolutionary doctrine that assumed the superiority of the white, European subject against the inferiority of the non-white other. Departing from these discourses, Freud visualises the origins of the social as emerging through the taboo on cannibalism; namely once the (paternal) law is psychically assimilated, the need for the re-enactment of cannibalistic rituals ceases to exist. This meant that Freud saw the social as premised upon the repression of cannibalistic desires, which, however, do not disappear but become part of the subject's unconscious life. In this sense, Freud not only marked the psychoanalytic subject as one which emerges out of the withdrawal of the wish to cannibalise, but also, he founds the discipline of psychoanalysis upon an ideology that, until then, was among the main processes of racialisation of the colonised peoples. I then move on to explore how this tension informs mechanisms and defences of the self, like identification and melancholia. Last but not least, I suggest that it is impossible to trace the subtle racial context embedded in psychoanalysis through Freud's use of the cannibal trope, without reading this choice historically, and psychosocially—namely, by asking the question of what Freud was trying to do. Therefore, in the final part of the chapter, I explore the link Freud made between cannibalism and the Christian ritual of the Eucharist as a refusal to forgo the loss of God, and instead ritualistically eating him. Reading this critique of Christianity against the anti-Semitism of his time, and in particular, in his relation to Carl Jung, I argue that the use of the cannibal trope conceals a powerful critique of the ideology of racial differences between Jews and Christians, from a psychoanalytic perspective. In other words, while Freud uses the imagery of cannibalism firstly in a theorisation of the unconscious that is racialised, he also uses the cannibal trope as a critique against the Christian, colonial subject.

Freud shows that there can be no individual that escapes being shaped by a racialised past, in terms of the nature and force of their drives. However, Freud also implied that not only external norms, but objects too can be incorporated within the human mind—in a direct parallel with cannibalism. Therefore, the following chapter looks at Melanie Klein's object-relations developmental theory, as well as her emphasis on orality as the site of various forms of internalisation. Klein's formulation of two psychic positions, the paranoid-schizoid and the

depressive, also follows on an evolutionary schema which is exposed once we follow the traces of a cannibal imagery and its racial assumptions. Klein, in talking about the infant's fantasy of devouring the mother, provides an obvious but nonetheless, unexplored relationship to racial othering. The Kleinian idea of an ordinary depression, based on reparation, is effectively a process of transitioning to a psychic state that has left cannibalism behind. Once historically contextualised in the early and late 1940s, the Kleinian idea of managing one's own cannibalistic desires, and the racial assumptions associated with it, can be read as a prevalence of a more democratic way of life. It is proposed, however, that Klein is enforced by social and institutional circumstances, as well as the logistics of her account of the death drive, to rely on some form of essential and idealised whiteness as a way out of destruction.

As well as developing the unconscious structures of subjectivity, psychoanalysts have also engaged in debates about the applicability and limitations of their theories. The fifth chapter takes as its point of departure the question of the universality of the psychoanalytic unconscious and looks at the work of the first anthropologically trained psychoanalyst, the Hungarian Géza Róheim, with Australian Aborigines. The chapter firstly looks at how ideas about Aborigines were forged in colonial text and shows that claims of Aboriginal maternal cannibalism enriched, albeit marginally, child-abduction policies. Róheim considers these social discourses and incorporates them into a model of an anti-Western form of psychosexual development. Psychoanalytic ideas that associate states of simplicity and savagery are regarded as ways to turn around racialised assumptions and construct less oppressive psychological and cultural theories. It is found that for Róheim culture can no longer be considered as irrelevant for the formation of psychic mechanisms and sexual difference. Maternal cannibalism for Róheim must be read alongside Aboriginal sexual freedom, excessive—but not sadistic—masculinity, and an overall state of happiness. However, it is suggested that despite unloading the racist connotations that weighed cannibalism as a ritual in the Western imaginary, it becomes gradually apparent that for Róheim there can be no Aboriginal femininity understood without some notion of threat or persecution. Róheim weaves racial assumptions onto Aboriginal sexual difference making a link between the fear of separating from the mother, seen as a cannibal who does not let the (male) child go, and masculinity. If so, the question remains open as to whether and how the cannibal trope can be essentially detached from the other and become incorporated in an

essentially racist gaze.

The next chapter (chapter six) addresses the question of the cannibal trope as part of colonial racism and the objectification of the racial other, through the work of Frantz Fanon. Fanon's arguments about black subjectivity, alienation and the epidermalization of racial difference will be deployed in the service of cutting a theoretical impasse that emerges through psychoanalysis' emphasis on the internal world of the individual. Fanon allows us to see the limits of a psychoanalytic paradigm and go beyond them in exploring racial difference and the unconscious from a position that is both inside and outside the psychoanalytic discourse. I use Fanon's concepts of desire and the body to show that the universal categories that psychoanalysis is based on amount to the erasure of racial difference. Last but not least, for the purposes of this project Fanon's discussion of the fear of the black man (what he calls 'negrophobia') is very relevant, as it shows that this fear is an unarticulated latent homosexual desire of the white man. The white unconscious is shown to be premised upon the limit of racial difference, which is embroiled with latent, homosexual desire. Fanon situates the cannibal trope in the white man's unconscious and sees the whole enterprise of colonialism, and its violent suppression of the black body as a form of a repressed sexual desire.

The displacement of the cannibal trope, the tensions between post-colonial theory and psychoanalysis become the main theme of the last chapter. I first turn to the work of Herbert Marcuse, who produced a Marxist rereading of Freudian psychoanalysis to explore how he handles the tension between the social and the psychic and what happens when a capitalist analysis is not accompanied by a post-colonial and feminist lens. Last, I consider some implications emerging from the tension between post-colonial theory and psychoanalysis, because of the latter's affinities with colonialism and in particular with the cannibal trope.

1.6 On Leftovers

So far, I have offered a brief outline of my project and a contemplation on methodology. I would now like to reflect on the process of case study selection, since it is not only a task that shapes the boundaries of the thesis but informs the thesis' overall argument and agenda. The choice of the four case studies was made on some basic criteria. Firstly, the question of chronology. My aim is to

study psychoanalytic theories of the subject in relation to the colonial fantasy of the cannibal trope, as these were formulated from the 1910s until the late 1950s. These historical limits are proposed as a suggestive framework that however, should not be understood as constituting a linear piece with a coherent narrative that is being dissected. The four case studies are not to be understood as following some progressive chronology or as evolving exponentially one after the other. There is no coherent history binding them altogether. Rather, the four case-studies represent variations of a particular theme that is firstly exposed in Freudian psychoanalytic theory and acquires a life and analysis of its own in literature following from Freud. In other words, my task has not been to define rigid historical boundaries and assume the historical timeframe between 1910 and 1960 as a coherent site in which to look for the cannibal trope. My methodology is the opposite; it begins from the fragmented references to the cannibal trope in the psychoanalytic discourse and by historically contextualising them highlights the nearby intellectual and historical web within which this grim idea comes into play. However, the absence of rigid historical landmarks does not mean that the project has no boundaries. It means that the form of its boundaries is not shaped according to conceptions of time as linear and progressive.

Furthermore, my aim has been to study psychoanalytic theories from Freud until the Fanon's death in 1961. This is a historical conjuncture that extends from a colonial moment to the emergence and fruition of several major decolonising movements. Decolonisation here is not used only in terms of political hegemony and administration (struggles between national liberation and metropolitan dependence continued in many of the former colonies) but in terms of a form of writing about the subject, in thinking about cultural and ethnic difference and in the deconstruction of 'race' as an essentialist category that marks radical difference through the skin. The decolonisation of India in 1947 was followed by

more than fifty nation-states established in Africa during the 1950s.²⁸ Hard-won anti-colonial battles in both Africa and Asia gave rise to a conceptualisation of a 'beyond the empire' future, supported by the institutional recognition of civil rights movements, movements on sexual liberation, major demographic shifts and the establishment of national hegemony, where European colonies were once standing. More importantly, decolonization which was first coined as a term in the 1930s, achieved its powerful political status as a 'cleansing' change from

²⁸ Raymond F. Betts, *Decolonisation: Making the Contemporary World*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004).

colonialism in the 1960s, marks the possibility of replacing the imperial political hegemony and the ideological, epistemological and discursive domination of the 'West' with other forms of political power.²⁹ However, in my understanding the 1960s mark the collective response of movements of human rights and political liberation in Europe and the United States that have challenged major assumptions about racial difference. Without getting into too much detail here, my interest has been to examine psychoanalytic fantasies within discursive regimes shaped by the colonial partitions of global territories, and forms of knowledge about the non-European other not yet challenged and dismantled.

Secondly, another methodological question that has troubled me was the criteria for case-study selection. I am aware that the four case studies raise certain issues, not only as to why these specific theorists have been chosen—this is an issue I develop in each chapter—but also, why other key psychoanalytic theorists have not. Given his prominent role within the field of psychosocial studies, and his contribution to development of psychoanalysis towards a direction that emphasises language as the primary regime enfolding meaning, one might wonder why Jacques Lacan is not included in an interrogation about the cannibal trope and psychoanalysis.

The overall trajectory of Lacan's psychoanalytic subject significantly differs from the Freudian and Kleinian tradition. Lacan emphasised language and speech as the primary site of the unconscious. He considered the psychoanalytic subject as split, but unlike Freud, the nature of this split is not upon repressed material but is created by the mediation of language. By allowing symbolism and thought language creates the unconscious—it does not expose the hidden meaning of the unconscious as a container. In other words, in Lacan the psychoanalytic subject emerges out of excessive meaning that symbolisation can never wholly manage.³⁰ Lacan named this irreducible surplus of meaning the "Real" and argued that it is not real in the sense of an actual, material existence, it does not correspond to particular social structures, quite the opposite, it cannot be captured by signification and can only be understood through its effects. My point here is that Lacan disrupts a fundamental binary between external reality and the internal unconscious world that predominates in Freudian, post-Freudian and Kleinian psychoanalysis. Lacan's emphasis on an abstract, structural system that

²⁹ Betts, 2.

³⁰ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1981).

creates the subject means that his theory has not been as concerned with the social, the group or the prehistoric pasts as Freud's, neither as preoccupied with a psychosexual, developmental narrative as Klein's.³¹ While it is true that in his early works Lacan acknowledges the cannibal trope in the context of his theory of identification—in his 1938 paper on the *Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual*—the overall trajectory of his work transgresses this kind of terminology and moves away from binary thinking symptomatic of the colonial discourse.³² This would beg the question of why not invoke Lacan as a counterforce to the colonial imaginings of the psychoanalysts examined here. The answer is to be found on the ways these psychoanalysts vacillate between the social and the psychic, the colonial imaginary and the designation of psychoanalytic otherness. During the time-frame under scrutiny here, Lacan's work moves away from the Freudian influence into a structural theory that does not sit uncomfortably next to post-colonial theory—which is the necessary tension that this project seeks to explore.

Overall, through the aforementioned theoretical limits it becomes clear that this thesis does not claim the possession of an absolute truth and insight about the nature of psychoanalytic discourse and its relations to colonialism. On the contrary, the four cases under scrutiny here only claim to embody moments where the friction between psychoanalytic and colonial thinking can be examined most clearly. In other words, they are typical and indicative cases that concern certain moments in the polymorphous and discontinuous history of psychoanalysis. What is more, the pairing between psychoanalysis and colonialism eventually aims at illuminating how colonialism is not a particular historical period that we can be easily done with. Colonial assumptions are heavily entangled in psychoanalytic concepts and forms of psychoanalytic theorisation. This means that the case-studies selection was not made to isolate the traces of a colonialist trope in order to accuse certain theorists of being complicit in the colonial project. The purpose of the case selection here is to highlight through

³¹ Frosh and Baraitser, "Psychoanalysis and Psychosocial Studies."

³² For example, critics like Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen have argued that Lacan resolves the 'normative *and* neurotic' aspects of Freudian theory by dissolving the illusion of knowing one's identity fully and suggesting that the Oedipus complex is not an achievement but a failure and that the subject itself emerges through 'a failure.' This shift of perspective, for Borch-Jacobsen bypassed the problems of 'good normalizing identification from the bad, rivalrous identification.' Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *Lacan: The Absolute Master*, trans. Douglas Brick (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991), 41. Emphasis in the original.

the contextual reading of psychoanalytic concepts and theories how difficult it is to bring the colonial past and its hauntings to rest. These four case studies help us identify, understand and evaluate the role of this colonial grammar, but, there is a lot of work to be done yet in this direction. These four case studies are only a beginning.

CHAPTER TWO

A Brief History of Cannibalistic Fantasies

2.1 The Question 'Cannibal' and a non-Cannibalistic Genealogy

The cannibal trope is one of the most popular categories associated with colonialism in the Western discourse. An etymological inquiry reveals that the word cannibal has its origins in the Spanish word *Canibales*, a variant of *Caribes*, first mentioned by Christopher Columbus after his conquest of the Caribbean islands in 1492. 'Through Spanish mispronunciation, Caribs became Canibs and eventually cannibals.'¹ Oddly enough, the word for the consumption of human flesh etymologically derives from one tribe living in the Caribbean islands, and the tautology between the Carib and the cannibal has survived in the European imagination, turning them into synonyms: the indigenous of another community is a man-eater.² The French historian Frank Lestrignant has offered two etymological alternatives—though not equally plausible. He attributes it to the Latin word for dog '*canis*,' which in turn is associated with the ancient representation of monsters as Cyclops, Cynocephalus (dog-headed) and Monoculi (one-eyed), or, the land of the Great Khan whose nationals were dog-headed men, and thus Cannibals could also be another term for the men of the Great Khan. This is because Columbus believed that by sailing into the West he could devise another sea route towards Asia. The last two explanations remain unproved, and in fact, they have faint possibilities of ever being verified.³ Nevertheless what all three of them share in common is that the cannibal is a monstrous non-human figure who belongs in community other than the European (Carib).

The category of the cannibal is one amongst other interlocking terms that have shaped the racial dualisms assumed to be immutable within the discourse of colonialism such as the primitive and the barbarian. While all these concepts are used interchangeably, they have different historical genealogies and highlight different dimensions of colonial opposition. Coming from the Latin word *silva*

¹ Walter Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 44.

² For more details on the inconsistencies of the colonial discourse on the naming of cannibalism, see Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), 45-87.

meaning forest, the concept of savagery was used to demarcate life as animality outside cultural organisation. Savagery meant the incapacity to belong to communities and thus implied a form of life as isolation. In the writings of French Enlightenment figures such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the figure of the *Noble Savage* represents a romantic nostalgia for nature as an alternative to the discontents, alienation, and inequalities of the French society.⁴ On a partially similar note, the term primitive was used to describe fantasies surrounding origins as well as to designate temporal difference and its vicissitudes. The primitives lived in eras long gone alongside forms of life that were as brutal as they were naïve, innocent, and simplistic.⁵ Finally, barbarism derives its origins in the Greco-Persian antagonism and initially it captured the linguistic difference—‘bar bar’ was the phonetic description of how the Persian language sounded to sophisticated Greek ears. But eventually, barbarism became associated with ethno-political conflicts and adumbrated otherness as irreducibly inferior in terms of economic, political, and moral organisation.⁶ Overall, all of these terms are caught up in assumptions that structure the Western identity on the basis of opposition. As Slabodsky puts it: ‘[T]he barbarians are a reified collective exhibiting characteristics that incarnate the antithesis of civilization’s desired self-image.’⁷

One of the central characteristics that separates cannibalism from the other three categories is that cannibalism is not a natural state, but a desire or a practice. While the primitives, the savages, and the barbarians are supposed to have cannibalistic desires, it is not necessary that they practice cannibalism altogether. Historically speaking, allegations of cannibalism have been addressed to one group of Aborigines against another. For example to discern the Caribs from

their friendly and peaceable neighbours, the Arawaks.⁸ In this case, cannibalism would be a practice assigned to tribes to segregate between those who would

⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on Inequality,” in *The Essential Rousseau: The Social Contract, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, Discourse on the Sciences, The Creed of a Savoyard Priest*, ed. Lowell Bair (New York: New American Library, 1974). (New York: New American Library, 1974)

⁵ Celia Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 24.

⁶ Santiago Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism: Triumphal Failures of Barbaric Thinking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 40.

⁷ Slabodsky, 40.

⁸ Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986).

collaborate with the Europeans, and others who would be more rebellious. Peter Hulme highlights that although the historical evidence for this distinction is circumstantial, the sharpness of the distinction is telling: those who would collaborate enjoyed inclusion whereas those resisting would be perceived as fierce, threatening, and in stark opposition to civilisation.⁹

However, the imagery of eating or being eaten as an allegory of domination entertains a variety of uses outside the colonial framework. For example, it can be found in linguistic metaphors expressing forms of perverse love as Alexei Ivanovich confesses to Polina Alexandrovna Praskovja in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel *The Gambler*: 'Do you know that I shall kill you one day? I shall kill you not because I shall cease to love you or be jealous, I shall simply kill you because I have an impulse to devour you.'¹⁰ Or, it has been used as an allegory employed to flesh out the intricacies of intimate desires in a slightly less murderous but still violent way, as in French feminist thought. In an essay titled 'Love of the Wolf,' Hélène Cixous employs the cannibal trope as a theoretical vehicle to talk about love as a form of physical transgression. For her, love appears as a surrender of one's physical integrity and individuality in the mouth of the other (similar to Alexei Ivanovich's passion)—love emerges only on the potential of the dissolution of boundaries:

Grown-ups pretend, but children get a thrill. The wolf says to the child: I'm going to eat you up. Nothing tickles the child more. That's the mystery: why does the idea that you're going to eat me up fill me with such pleasure and such terror? It's to get this pleasure that you need the wolf. The wolf is the truth of love, its cruelty, its fangs, its claws, our aptitude for ferocity. Love is when you suddenly wake up as a cannibal, and not just any old cannibal or else wake up destined for devouement. [...] For us, eating and being eaten belong to the terrible secret of love. We love *only* the person we can eat. The person we hate we 'can't swallow.' That one makes us vomit.¹¹

For Cixous love does not lead into an equal merging (who devours the wolf?), but in a union through the engulfment of the other. Cannibalistic love is founded upon domination based on an order different from humanity: it needs 'wolves.' On a partially similar note, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida has argued

⁹ Hulme.

¹⁰ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Gambler and Other Stories*, trans. Constance Garnett (London, Melbourne, Toronto: William Heinemann Ltd, 1957), 28.

¹¹ Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Routledge Classics, 2005), 78.

that while bestiality is a common denominator for the pariah and the outsider, in Western philosophical thought it is linked with sovereignty, too. For Derrida, the desire to devour is not an indication of love but of domination: it is the desire *par excellence* of the ‘sovereign’ subject—might ‘its greatest force, its absolute potency be, in essence and always in its last instance, a power of devouement (mouth, teeth, tongue, violent rush to bite, engulf, swallow the other, to take the other into oneself too, to kill it or mourn it?’¹²

Nevertheless, the idea of cannibalism as gesture of inclusion whereas hate is a form of vomiting had previously been taken up by Claude Lévi-Strauss in relation to strategies of dealing with difference at the level of society. In his 1961 *Tristes Tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss argues that there are *anthropophagic* societies where the foreigner is forced to assimilate to become absorbed in the ‘body public.’ Also, there are *anthropoemic* (from the Greek work *emein*, meaning to vomit) societies where the foreigner is segregated and isolated. While the former involves a violent inclusion, the latter is based on a forced exclusion. However, it is worth pointing out that Lévi-Strauss has stressed that the anthropophagic societies seen as ‘primitive’ and inspiring ‘the profoundest horror’ are no less barbaric than the Western ones where ‘vomiting’ hatred onto the other prevails. ‘Societies which seem to us ferocious may turn out, when examined from another point of view, to have their humane and benevolent sides.’¹³ While Cixous regards cannibalism as a unilateral phenomenon, Lévi-Strauss acknowledges how cannibalism as an assumed practice is strongly dependent on the eye of the observer.

There is no wonder why such a rich allegory has had an intellectual resonance with the psychoanalytic project as we will see in the chapters that follow. The cannibal trope takes up an important question of ethics, starting from the point of ambivalence: how does one manage otherness? What are the boundaries and the limits of interpersonal relations of love, aggression, sadism, and hatred? And, how are these boundaries reconfigured at the level of the social? My aim in this chapter is not to ‘cannibalise’ theory by incorporating each and every debate that has engaged with patterns of eating. Instead, my interest is on cannibalism as a trope with a racial ramification central to coloniality. As Peter Hulme puts it: ‘The racial dimension of the discourse of cannibalism was never far from the

¹² Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and The Sovereign*, vol. I (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 23.

¹³ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John Russell (New York: Criterion Books, 1961), 386.

surface during the colonial period: the tendency was to associate cannibalistic practice with darkness of skin.¹⁴

However, had this genealogy commenced the moment of the iconic colonial conquest of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean, then the question of the cannibal would be based upon an important methodological mistake. Columbus did not ‘discover’ cannibals in America—but rather there was a pre-existing European framework about otherness as threatening and consuming that became amalgamated through this encounter. Therefore, my research will take as its point of departure *not* the emergence of the modern world, but it will go back to Ancient Greece and trace the histories and myths about figures that have been portrayed as ‘cannibalistic’ since. This point of departure is chosen for two reasons. Firstly, Ancient Greek mythology has been one of the pillars shaping Western thought and alongside it, the psychoanalytic canon (although as we will see Freud drops the Ancient Greek signification of cannibalism and adopts the colonial one).¹⁵ Secondly, and more importantly, one of the claims this chapter is making is that cannibalism has been a predominantly Western trope of thinking about domination and otherness. Unsurprisingly, accusations of perverse eating can be found in crucial moments in Western history—from the Greco-Roman era to the first persecutions of Christians alongside witch-hunting and the anti-Semitic tale of the ritual murder. Nevertheless, as Santiago Slabodsky has stressed, genealogical readings can dangerously lapse into anachronism as they tend to reconstruct their narratives as a linear and ‘naturalized’ Western history.¹⁶

Anachronistic readings tend to assume a logical sequence of events that evolves as a form of scaffolding. Slabodsky cautions that these imposed forms of linearity conceal the fundamental disjunctures between Ancient Greece, Rome, and the contemporary West. As a result, one of the major victories of the colonial discourse, I argue echoing Slabodsky, has been not only that it justified domination on the grounds of the Aboriginal’s cannibalism but also it concealed how this category was born from the very core of European thought in the first

¹⁴ Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen, *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 30.

¹⁵ Garfield Tourney, “Freud and the Greeks: A Study of the Influence of Classical Greek Mythology and Philosophy Upon the Development of Freudian Thought,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 1, no. 1 (1965): 67–85, [https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696\(196501\)1:1<67::AID-JHBS2300010109>3.0.CO;2-N](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696(196501)1:1<67::AID-JHBS2300010109>3.0.CO;2-N).

¹⁶ Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism: Triumphal Failures of Barbaric Thinking*, 41.

place. Cannibalism has been the trope of this concealment.

2.2 The Cannibals that Never Were—a Second Take on the Genealogy of a Fantasy

So far, I have discussed cannibalism as an ‘alleged’ practice, one that emanates from European thought and imagination, implying that it is more a matter of perspective than an observable, concrete reality. Even more so, in this section, I want to suggest that cannibalism has been a paramount European fantasy about otherness. By anthropologists, cannibalism has been regarded a practice that can be observed, documented and described, and for this reason it has become a topic of passionate debates about its existence and meaning. After the 1970s, critical anthropologists highlighted how anthropology has been complicit with the colonial project.¹⁷ In this sense, a ground for a critique was opened, and it allowed the revision of evidence that rendered non-European cultures cannibalistic. The most important work of this kind is that of William Arens. Arens was an American anthropologist who in 1979 published a book arguing that the anthropological evidence for cannibalistic practices of Aboriginal tribes from the 15th century onwards had not been sufficiently supported, and as a result, cannibalism should be regarded as a profound component of the colonial mythology that ideologically justified conquest.¹⁸ Arens’ compelling and provocative work examined anthropological accounts of man-eating to show that they are devoid of first-hand documentation and sustainable anthropological evidence. Within a few decades, critical anthropologists discussed cannibalism as a ‘talk,’¹⁹ a ‘meta-myth,’²⁰ an ‘ideology,’²¹ a colonial obsession;²² as a signifier covering up something that is not really there. In short, the history of cannibalism

¹⁷ Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (London: Ithaca Press, 1973); George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York & London: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1987).

¹⁸ Walter Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

¹⁹ Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* (U.S.A: University of California Press, 2005); Gananath Obeyesekere, “Cannibal Feasts in Nineteenth-Century Fiji: Seamen’s Yarns and the Ethnographic Imagination,” in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, ed. Francis Barker and Margaret Iversen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 63–86.

²⁰ Tracey Banivanua-Mar, “Cannibalism and Colonialism: Charting Colonies and Frontiers in Nineteenth-Century Fiji,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 2 (2010): 255–81.

²¹ Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986).

²² Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen, *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

has been a history of an absence or a fake presence.

The implication is not that human flesh consumption has never taken place as a practice—it is not a question of denial.²³ There are several accounts of cannibalism in the context of shipwrecks, on-board famine, dire food scarcity²⁴ and as part of complex mourning rituals.²⁵ These instances, however, are conceptually different from cannibalism which indicates a fantasy about another who *wants to, or, is going to eat me*.²⁶ In this chapter, I am dealing with the latter: the fantasy of what a otherness is going to do to the self and reversely. For reasons of clarity, I am going to maintain the distinction originally coined by Peter Hulme between anthropophagy (a Greek term literally meaning man-eating) which describes the act of consuming human flesh, and cannibalism as a fear and desire to annihilate through merging, as inherent in European culture.²⁷

To think cannibalism as a fantasy means to think about the colonial structures as supported by psychological resonances that problematise the immutability of normative dichotomies between the civilised self and the cannibal other. It is to argue that the cannibal has been a construction of imagination that has had psychological as much as a political utility. It has been a handy accusation and representation persistent for different reasons in different historical times, deployed for different political purposes and with different social outcomes. Therefore, my

²³ The anthropologist Marshal Sahlins was one of the few opposing the arguments about cannibalism as a tool of colonialism by grouping together the denial of cannibalism with Holocaust denial. He argued that challenging cannibalism is part of an ‘anti-intellectual conspiracy’ to cast doubt against clearly strong historical facts. Peter Hulme’s critique of Sahlins is fascinating. Hulme argued that while the available evidence for the Holocaust is in stark contrast with the thin evidence for cannibalistic practices, there is a distinction between cannibal scepticism on the grounds of colonial ideology and fantasy, and denying historical accounts motivated by anti-Semitism to perpetuate fascism. However, what is intriguing in this association is the connection between cannibalism, genocide and mass murder justified on the grounds of protecting humanity from sub-humans; a core distinction for modernity’s domination. Peter Hulme, “Introduction: The Cannibal Scene,” in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, ed. Francis Barker and Margaret Iversen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 13–15.

²⁴ In the 18th century there were several cases of shipwreck cannibalism reported in Europe, the most famous among them being the Duddley and Stevens case (1884). The case was eventually incorporated in Customs of the Sea, and the act was not considered as legally murder. See: A.W.B. Simpson, “Cannibals at Common Law,” *The Law School Record* 27 (1981): 3–10.

²⁵ For example, the anthropologist Beth A. Conklin discusses the mourning rituals of an Indian tribe in Western Amazonian, the Wari’ Indians whose mourning rituals involved the consumption of the dead’s flesh from their kins. However, Conklin explains that during her fieldwork she had no chance to witness the ritual. Beth A. Conklin, *Consuming Grief: Compassionate Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society* (University of Texas Press, 2001).

²⁶ Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*.

²⁷ Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797*, 86.

historically-situated readings of the genealogical episodes of the cannibal trope enable me to make a case about cannibalism, and on how during colonialism it became naturalised—it structured the distinction of racial difference. The cannibal signifies the racial other. My argument is that the construction of the new vocabulary of the cannibal trope (as its etymology exposes) carried forward assumptions about otherness dating back to Ancient times while it concealed pre-colonial histories of domination and presented cannibals as natural enemies of Western culture who were ‘eventually’ discovered through the colonial conquest.

2.3 Anthropophagy in Ancient Greece

Despite being a predominantly modern term, binaries of the eater and the eaten historically appear much earlier than the commencement of the period of colonisation. In the Classical Greek tradition, anthropophagic monsters were constructed as examples of social isolation. Homer’s epic poem *Odyssey* is one key text where anthropophagy is discussed as an example of transgression of social norms, especially hospitality. Odysseus and his comrades shipwreck in the land of the Cyclops and find shelter in one of the Cyclops’ caves when one of them, Polyphemus, discovers the hapless travellers and devours a few of them. Polyphemus’ act is an insult to Greek ideals of hospitality—the foreigner must be protected from harm.²⁸ He soon finds punishment by Odysseus who tricks the foolish ogre. The motifs of incorporation as a collapse of boundaries and identification are rife in the text. Polyphemus’ anthropophagy renders the land of the Cyclops, as a place outside the *polis*, a dangerous and uncontrollable one. The Cyclops are excessive in terms of demeanour and appearance. They are gigantic one-eyed semi-human creatures that inhabit a far-away island and live in caves isolated from each other while they have uncontrollable physical power and do not obey Greek ideals. In Euripides’ retelling of the story, the emphasis on rules governing social life becomes even clearer because he has the Cyclops explicitly sketched as nomads. When Odysseus reaches their island he asks: ‘Who is their leader? Do they have a democratic state?’ only to receive the reply that ‘they are nomads; nobody listens to or [obeys] anybody about anything.’²⁹

²⁸ François Hartog, *Memories of Odysseus: Frontier Tales from Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001). For more about the idea of hospitality in relation to hubris, see: Julian Pitt-Rivers, “The Law of Hospitality,” in *The Fate of Schechem or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, vol. 2 (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 94–112.

²⁹ François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 205.

Anthropophagy then becomes a rhetorical trope to articulate the dangers of anomie. Echoing Aristotle, Jacques Derrida has argued that it is only gods, kings, or beasts that live outside the invisible boundaries of society whilst at the same time marking them as such.³⁰

Images of anthropophagy in relation to anomie and divinity are encountered in the genealogy of Greek gods which consists of a succession of fathers devouring their sons, with the latter taking revenge by castrating them—a heirloom that ends with the genesis of the Greek Pantheon. Through the Father of Greek mythology, Hesiod, we learn that the story of the genesis is a story about a jealous and anxious father, Kronos, the ‘cannibal patriarch of Olympians’³¹ who ate all his children to avoid being supplanted. According to Hesiod’s *Theogony*, the plan was cancelled by the youngest one of them, Zeus, whom Kronos did not devour because his mother had hidden him away as a baby. Zeus tricked his father, and with the help of a purgative, freed his siblings who were released from the paternal body as if from a surrogate pregnancy.³² In this instance, the motif of anthropophagy is related to questions of origins and the limits of kinship as it attests to the paternal desire for affirmation of ownership over the child, which is why Rhea allows Kronos to devour his children. Being eaten is portrayed as a form of incorporation, not followed by digestion—and hence, destruction—which in turn allows the return to the paternal body and the experience of a male surrogate pregnancy.³³ These questions of origins and belonging, paternal engulfment, and identification are persevered in Christian theology—also imbued with a quasi-anthropophagic act. In fact, the early persecutions of the small, scattered nomadic Christian sects under the Roman Empire were reinforced by accusations of incestuous orgies and anthropophagic feasts.³⁴

2.4 Christianity, Witchcraft, anti-Semitism

If there is a particularly popular cultural practice that approximates cannibalism

³⁰ Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and The Sovereign*, vol. I (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

³¹ Marina Warner, *No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling, and Making Mock* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998), 9.

³² Marina Warner, “Fee Fie Fo Fum: The Child in the Jaws of the Story,” in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³³ Warner, 169.

³⁴ Norman Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom*, 2nd ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1993), 8.

in the European tradition, it would certainly be the Christian communion. The Christian ritual of the Eucharist, first proposed by Saint Paul in the 2nd century A.D., ties together incorporation, community, and Christianity demonstrating how the ecclesiastical body of the Church is equated with that of Jesus, encouraging an enforced identification and unity within the Christian community—one could argue, it is similar to what Levi-Strauss categorised as an ‘anthropophagic’ organisation.³⁵ Christianity was based on the idea that slaves, peasants, and masters; Roman, Greeks, and, barbarians could all become members of the same ecclesiastical body by participating in the communion. As such, Slabodsky observes that the Christian Church ‘severed traditional boundaries delimiting and circumscribing human action according to polis, nation, class, or tribe.’³⁶ Through the act of communion, the worshippers would repeat Jesus’ offering of his flesh and blood in the Last Supper, and would remind themselves that the equal partaking establishes an egalitarian relationship against God that erased their ethno-political diversities.

However, an important theological issue about the communion was the nature of its content—as it associated the Christian ritual with anthropophagy. Prior to the 13th century, the claims of Jesus’ presence in the bread and wine posed a series of problems associated with the lack of clarity surrounding the nature of the consumption. Two popular positions sustained that either the Eucharist is an entirely symbolic act, proposing a more spiritual relation with God’s incorporated body, or it is an act where Jesus’ actual flesh is consumed, which meant that the Christian ritual could be easily translated as an anthropophagic act.³⁷ The ‘spiritual’ position did not satisfactorily clarify how God’s flesh and blood are communicated to the worshippers whereas the materialist position would often excite worshippers into a frenzy of miraculous visions about the Eucharist’s bread being replaced by the ‘smiling infant Jesus’ or ‘bleeding meat.’³⁸ Both contested and asserted, Jesus’ presence in the sacrament was institutionally settled in the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. In order to compromise between the two positions and affirm a unified and coherent ecclesiastical body, excluding heresies, the Council legislated that in the Eucharist the miracle of transubstantiation takes place, namely, the bread and wine acquired the substance of Jesus Christ,

³⁵ Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*.

³⁶ Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism: Triumphal Failures of Barbaric Thinking*.

³⁷ Kilgour, 81.

³⁸ Merrall L. Price, *Consuming Passions: The Uses of Cannibalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York & London: Routledge, 2003), 28–31.

without changing in form—a solution which turned out far from satisfactory.³⁹

Despite the theological settlement of the nature of the communion, Christianity did not seem to put fantasies of human flesh consumption to rest. During the Middle Ages, accusations of anthropophagy informed religious persecutions against Jews and witches. Norman Cohn describes witchcraft as a persistent medieval stereotype mostly aiming at women through conspiracies, paranoid fears and irrational accusations. Witches, shows Cohn, were seen as forming mystical societies that practice ‘*maleficium*’ and conspired against Christian faith.⁴⁰ They symbolised apostasy and devil-worshipping, and they posed a threat to families, to husbands, to children, to neighbours and to society in general. But above all, I argue, witchcraft symbolised the evil, dark side of motherhood and was used to demarcate the duties, obligations and the dangers of mothering a child.

Witches were believed to specialize in the killing of babies and small children. More than mere malice was at work here—witches needed the corpses for very young flesh; according to some writers of the time, to kill, cook and eat a baby which had not yet been baptised was a witch’s greatest pleasure. But the flesh of infants was also full of supernatural power. As an element in magical concoctions it could be used to kill other human beings, or else a captured witch to keep silent under torture. It could also be blended in a salve which, applied to a witch’s body, enabled her to fly.⁴¹

As it becomes clear in the passage, the witch and the baby were seen as a powerful and threatening pairing, having magical, super-human properties. This phobic stance towards the mother/witch that draws power from her baby and, on the contrary, poses a deadly danger to it, is a theme that emerges in the psychoanalytic view on motherhood, as part of her desire—as we will later see. Moreover, in feminist literature witchcraft constitutes an iconic example of the institutionalisation of patriarchal control since the allegations of eating babies has been regarded as a form of power constitution over the female body, sexuality, and reproductive powers. As Silvia Federici has argued the aim of the persecutions was not the punishment of certain acts of witchcraft but the eradication of certain forms of femininity which ‘had to be made abominable

³⁹ Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation*, 83.

⁴⁰ Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom*, 147.

⁴¹ Cohn, 145.

in the eyes of the population.⁴² The witch-hunting in Europe fed into the ethnographic lens through which the simultaneously ‘discovered’ monstrously feminised Aboriginal cultures were interpreted.⁴³ Another characteristic of the European witch-hunting was the portrayal of the witches’ practices so that they symbolised the ‘quintessence of anti-Christianity.’⁴⁴ Cohn explains that witches were believed to meet in synagogues, and later to organise ‘orgiastic gatherings’ known as ‘sabbats.’⁴⁵ The reference to Judaism was made to illustrate that the institutionalisation of the persecution of witchcraft would not be possible without a pre-existing form of discrimination and othering that sprang from a much older figure; that of the Jew. While Jews were also accused of ‘*maleficium*’ Cohn explains that the distinction between the Jew and the witch was instituted on the latter’s apostasy from the Christian faith.⁴⁶

From the 1870s onwards, the medieval myth of ‘ritual murder,’ or ‘blood libel’ revived in the Eastern Europe. Social and political changes had marked the rise of an intensely anti-Semitic activity in Central and Eastern Europe with pogroms, riots, street harassment, and anti-Jewish petitions alongside spontaneous forms of racial abuse and stereotyping. The emerging public anti-Semitic discourse breathed new life into the old medieval superstition that was seemingly incompatible with the modernisation of life in the Central European capitals, and at odds with the budding spirit of rationality and scientific prominence.⁴⁷

According to the myth—which has admitted several variations since the Middle Ages—before the *Passover* Jews kidnapped, fattened, and murdered a Christian boy (girls were occasionally used, too), drained his blood, and used it for the making of the *matzah* (unleavened bread). In some cases, the intestines and the heart were devoured separately as well.⁴⁸ During the middle Ages, ritual murder accusations sparked pogroms and mass executions of Jewish communities but the revival of the myth in the nineteenth century communities in Eastern Europe

⁴² Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004), 170.

⁴³ Federici, 221.

⁴⁴ Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom*, 145.

⁴⁵ Cohn, 145.

⁴⁶ Cohn, 147.

⁴⁷ Hillel J. Kieval, “The Rules of the Game: Forensic Medicine and the Language of Science in the Structuring of Modern Ritual Murder Trials,” *Jewish History* 26, no. 3/4 (2012): 287–307; Robert Weinberg, “The Blood Libel in Eastern Europe,” *Jewish History* 26, no. 3/4 (2012): 275–85.

⁴⁸ Alan Dundes, “The Ritual Murder or Blood Libel Legend: A Study of Anti-Semitic Victimization through Projective Inversion,” in *The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

required a different form of power structure for the circulation and sustenance of these allegations. It was because on the one hand, in the Habsburg and the Russian Empires more members of the public were literate, and hence were granted access to information about the trials' details through mass-circulated press,⁴⁹ and on the other hand, witness testimonies were not sufficient in establishing criminal investigations and persecutions, and instead, a more sophisticated system of forensic examination and presentation of judicial evidence was in place.⁵⁰ The clash between modern, rational, scientific, cultural worldviews and superstitious, prejudiced, irrational, magic ones reflected a polarisation in the public life of central European communities, in which 'ritual murder' was a sensationalist and extravagant paradox. In the words of an anti-Semitic editorial for a 1913 ritual murder trial: '[A]ttorneys did not permit themselves to accept that there "could be ritual murders in the century of airplanes and electric trams".⁵¹ Between 1879 and 1913, Jewish defendants stood trial for 'ritual murders' in Russia, Austria-Hungarian, and German Empires while the allegations peaked in the decade before the turn of the century between 1891 and 1900 when 120 such accusations were made public in the Eastern Europe and the German Empire.⁵² By the end of the nineteenth century, the anti-Semitic construction of the figure of the Jew had come to symbolise, among others, an adherence to a retrograde, medieval mysticism, and savagery through the sacrificial consumption of Christian blood and intestines: a gothic imagery not exhausted in the folklore.

In his 1867 publication of *The Capital*, Karl Marx draws on the same blood-thirsty trope to critique capitalism as a system structured on self-draining and self-consumption. Marx conceives the function of capital through the imagery of sucking something valuable and vital (labour) from the working classes (the living) only to produce more dead capital: 'Capital is dead labour, which vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour and lives the more,

⁴⁹ Weinberg, "The Blood Libel in Eastern Europe," 279.

⁵⁰ Kieval, "The Rules of the Game: Forensic Medicine and the Language of Science in the Structuring of Modern Ritual Murder Trials."

⁵¹ Weinberg, "The Blood Libel in Eastern Europe," 279.

⁵² Kieval, "The Rules of the Game: Forensic Medicine and the Language of Science in the Structuring of Modern Ritual Murder Trials," 288; Helmut Walser Smith, "Konitz, 1900: Ritual Murder and Antisemitic Violence," in *Exclusionary Violence: Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History*, ed. Christhard Hoffman, Werner Bergmann, and Helmut Walser Smith (University of Michigan Press, 2002), 94.

the more labour it sucks,⁵³ and again: ‘[T]he means of production [are the] devourers of living labour.’⁵⁴ Whether Marx was intending, or not, to fashion his critique upon anti-Semitic vocabulary is beyond the scope of this chapter.⁵⁵ However, it suffices to emphasise that the widespread fantasy of an all-powerful agency (inveterate moneylenders, blood-thirsty, cannibalistic ruling classes) threatening to drain and *suck* the life out of communities was either tolerated or passionately supported by the late 19th century anti-capitalist struggles. In fact, one wonders whether the timelessly topical anti-capitalist slogan ‘eat the rich’ popularises a reversely aggressive anti-capitalist sentiment, originating from Marx’s theorisation of capitalist exploitation. Nevertheless, the point is that in this world-view it is the greediness and the voracious hunger of the Jew that drives his hunting for Christian blood, the plotting of financial exploitation, and the uncontrollable absorption of something precious, vital, and desirable that the non-Jewish communities possessed. In short, the cannibal fantasies projected on Jewish communities exposed financial, cultural, social, and religious anxieties⁵⁶ and informed the anti-Semitic imagery of a people which *live among us, eat our flesh, and suck our (Christian) blood*.

2.5 Cannibals at the Margins of European Empire

In February 1493, whilst returning from the first accidental contact with the Amerindians, the Genovese sailor Christopher Columbus wrote a statement to the Spanish Crown and public about the process and findings of the voyage. The letter was published and disseminated in Barcelona in April 1493 and within a

⁵³ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, 3rd ed., vol. I (Penguin Books, 1982), 342.

⁵⁴ Marx, I:983.

⁵⁵ The question of Marx’s anti-Semitism has been mostly debatable in his work *On the Jewish Question* (1844). Although it can be argued that many passages can be read ironically, the overall question is one regarding the political emancipation of Jews (being granted civil rights), and what Marx saw as social and human emancipation, for which the abolition of all differences is the aim. In this sense, Marx’s text can be read as an assimilationist one which disregards cultural particularity in favour of an undifferentiated equality. For more on the debate see: Robert Fine and Philip Spencer, *Anti-Semitism and the Left: On the Return of the Jewish Question* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2017); Dennis K. Fischman, *Political Discourse in Exile: Karl Marx and the Jewish Question* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991).

⁵⁶ Gavin I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996); Ernest A. Rappaport, “The Ritual Murder Accusation: The Persistence of Doubt and the Repetition Compulsion,” in *The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 318; Weinberg, “The Blood Libel in Eastern Europe,” 275.

few years it was translated into several languages across Europe (Latin, French, German, Italian, and Catalan).⁵⁷ Addressed to various administrators, officials, and royals, the letter functioned as an informative and detailed description of the islands alongside the climate and the environmental conditions thereof, and a lively—yet idealised—portrait of the indigenous cultures. The overarching purpose of the report was to celebrate Columbus' achievement of finding 'many islands inhabited by men without number, of all which I took possession for our most fortunate king [...]'⁵⁸ and to attract financial aid and investments, prolonging the Spanish presence in the Caribbean islands by making claims for merchantable goods.⁵⁹ Above all, the letter provided an extensive and popularised early account of the proto-colonial contact with indigenous cultures that whets the imperial appetite and confirms the exigency of Spanish intervention.

The feminist historian Anne McClintock has argued that the colonial space becomes the space where race is invented and exhibited, and in this process of construction, gender and sexuality were the founding stones. From her analysis of images and journals from the proto-colonial period, McClintock argues that in the imperial imagination the 'terra incognita,' or the unknown lands, were feminised. In his letter, Columbus portrayed the lands as abundant in natural wealth: The lands were 'fertile' with 'salubrious rivers,' 'beautiful,' and 'full of a variety of trees stretching up to the stars,'⁶⁰ and their inhabitants are naked, peaceful, and well-formed, 'timid and full of fear,'⁶¹ they are ready and 'favourably inclined' to convert to 'the holy religion of Christ.'⁶² More amusingly so, while sailing toward the Caribbean islands, Columbus fantasised the earth as 'a woman's breast, with a protuberance upon its summit in the unmistakable shape of a nipple—toward which he was slowly sailing.'⁶³ As we will see in Chapter Four, Melanie Klein uses a similar image of conquest to describe the boy's response to the unknown and terrifying maternal breast. Furthermore, McClintock identifies a paradox running through the travel journals from

⁵⁷ Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797*, 42.

⁵⁸ Christopher Columbus, *The Letter of Columbus on the Discovery of America*, Digital, The Library of Congress (New York: Lenox Library, 1892), 2.

⁵⁹ 'I promise this, that if I am supported by our most invincible sovereigns with a little of their help, as much gold can be supplied as they will need [...].' Columbus, 11.

⁶⁰ Columbus, *The Letter of Columbus on the Discovery of America*, 3.

⁶¹ Columbus, 5.

⁶² Columbus, 8.

⁶³ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 21.

Columbus to Amerigo Vespucci which she called the 'long tradition of male travel as an erotics of ravishment.'⁶⁴ McClintock argues that the feminisation of the unknown newly encountered lands demarcated the limits of European masculinity and framed the conquest in relation to male fears and lust. In the European imagination the colonial spaces were invested with libidinal desires and fears about the infinite possibilities of gendered and sexualised bodies: '[M]en sported gigantic penises and women consorted with apes, feminized men's breasts flowed with milk and militarized women lopped theirs off.'⁶⁵

In the proto-colonial narrative, the cannibal trope became the image of a threatening unknown. As previously shown in medieval atrocities and persecutions, accusations of human flesh eating were made in order to dehumanise, exclude, and separate the prudent Christians from the demonic and monstrous witches and Jews. In the colonial context, the cannibal trope becomes an assumed 'essence' of the figures of the margins. In his letter to the Spanish crown, Columbus also reported a certain island of the Caribbean, with competent and well-equipped warriors who 'eat human flesh' and 'are considered warlike wherefore the other Indians are afflicted with continual fear.'⁶⁶ Compared with the idyllic image of the rich and nurturing, breast-like lands, and the yielding nature of some of the inhabitants that lured the European male hero, the anthropophagic neighbours made the colonial invasion necessary so as to protect the good and naïve Caribbeans from the bad and cannibalistic ones. The cannibals were to be found in a yet unconquered and unknown 'certain island of the Caribbean.' They were figures living at the threshold of the European empires. Columbus not only carried to the New World assumptions of masculinity and femininity and used what Federici calls an ethnographical 'lens' to interpret the Amerindians.⁶⁷ But, as psychoanalytically-informed readings such as McClintock's expose, he also carried forward imperial fantasies about the margins that were used to demarcate and libidinally energise the colonial exploration in terms of gendered violence. Indeed, the tradition of associating the unknown with the possibility of cannibalism, as something that lures, swallows, engulfs, and terrifies can be found in cartographic practices where the areas on maps not explored yet were marked with the word 'cannibals.' McClintock comments: 'With the word cannibal, cartographers attempted to ward off the

⁶⁴ McClintock, 22.

⁶⁵ McClintock, 22.

⁶⁶ Columbus, 10.

⁶⁷ Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 221.

threat of the unknown by naming it, while at the same time confessing a dread that the unknown might literally rise up and devour the whole.⁶⁸ Therefore, the word 'cannibal' literally became the name that marked the outer borders of the European empires, that is, a figure of the margins.

Colonial iconography exposes most vividly the intricacies of the cannibal trope in relation to imperial subjectivity, masculine megalomania, and the feminised other. A famous 1587 engraving of a Flemish artist, Jan van der Straet, working in Florence captures another Italian navigator, that is, Amerigo Vespucci at the moment he set foot on Brazil. The scene is presented as a scene of seduction: it presents on the one side, the conquistador, in full armour, holding the symbols of war (sword), science (astrolabe), and civilisation (flag); and on the other, a half-naked long-haired woman in a hammock 'erotically inviting' the conquistador to lie with her.⁶⁹ In the middle, there is an indiscernible scene for Vespucci consisting of several women engaging in a cannibalistic feast, roasting a human leg, and a remarkable absence of indigenous men. The colonial contact is translated into an experience of a threshold and in-between binaries: the sea and land, the naked and clothed, male and female, raw and cooked, rational and eroticised, conquest and sex.⁷⁰ As such, in hosting cannibals, the threshold is a place of risk for imperial masculinity.

What these accounts from the early colonial contact expose is the fantasy of Europe's margins as a fearful and anxiety-invoking place. Vespucci's problematic account of indigenous femininity may be regarded as producing the indigenous as others in a way that constantly affirms the imperial subject's sense of supremacy and consolidates the Christian duty to respond to such a savage threat (they eat their enemies). Resembling an all-powerful gigantic breast or populated by sexually inviting yet devouring women, these unchartered lands and waters expose an 'acute paranoia' for physical vulnerability.⁷¹ For McClintock, the feminisation of the threat functions as a 'compensatory gesture' in the sense that it substantiates the reason for such a powerful masculine anxiety into a more familiarly threatening trope,⁷² the female body's (sexual) containment as incorporation. The imagery of an all-powerful female breast and body both

⁶⁸ McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, 27.

⁶⁹ McClintock, 26.

⁷⁰ McClintock, 26.

⁷¹ McClintock, 24.

⁷² McClintock, 24.

promises to nurture those ragged men travelling towards it but also threatens to swallow them. In other words, the anxiety of boundary loss gets projected on the island of the Caribs, and therefore, male fragility and anxiety are disavowed and displaced by the inhabitants who in turn become cannibals. It is they who pose a physical threat to the body of the conquistadors, and by extension, to the body of the Christian commonwealth.

The rhetoric of cannibalism signifies that the fear of being lost in the unknown lands and annihilated by their inhabitants is a fear dominant in these spaces of proto-colonial liminality. Accordingly, the fantasy of being engulfed in the unchartered oceanic waters and lands turned the male conquistadors also into figures of 'liminality' and 'threshold,' which in turn necessitated and justified excessive masculine violence, equally sweeping and devouring.⁷³ In the land of the outlaws, aggression and excessive anti-social behaviour is allowed and encouraged since it accomplishes the psychical disownment of the anxiety of being annihilated in the body of the other. Eventually, the Central American cannibalism became the 'mark of greatest imaginable cultural difference,'⁷⁴ by being inscribed upon and enriching another framework marking radical difference, that is, sexuality. As a result, the figure of the cannibal becomes the epitome of male anxieties around the vulnerability of the body, emerging through the contact with cultural difference and otherness. The fantasy of the man-eating other becomes a very personally felt threat.

While protocolonial iconography exposes the fantasies associated with the imperial unknown, it is important to look at how European law and institutions were equally dependent on fantasies of engulfment, and regulated them. The colonial law of 1503 vividly exposes how the cannibal trope became the excuse that justified the European atrocities of murder, rape, and colonial enslavement.

The 1503 decree is also known as the 'Cannibal Law' and was issued by Queen Isabella to settle the alleged indigenous threats in the New World by means of conversion to Christianity:⁷⁵

Every person under my command who should go to the islands and Terra

⁷³ McClintock, 24.

⁷⁴ Hulme, "Introduction: The Cannibal Scene," 20.

⁷⁵ Michael Palencia Roth, "The Cannibal Law of 1503," in *Early Images of the Americas: Transfer and Invention*, ed. Jerry M. Williams and Robert E. Lewis (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993).

Firma of the said Ocean Sea... that if the said cannibals should resist and not wish to receive and welcome in their lands the captains and peoples who by my command go and make the said voyages, and if [the cannibals] do not wish to listen to them in order to be indoctrinated in the things of our Holy Catholic Faith and enter my service and become subject to me, may and can capture in order to take them to whichever lands and islands... in order that they might be sold and a profit be made.⁷⁶

The decree effectively legalised and encouraged enslavement after the initial quest for gold and spices had come to nothing.⁷⁷ Michael Palencia Roth argues that for the Spanish settlements in the Caribbean islands, the instructions of the decree were 'clear and unambiguous' and resulted in a frenzy of accusations of tribes, groups and whole islands as cannibalistic.⁷⁸ The allegations were legalised only once 'witnessed by a Spanish bureaucrat and duly notarized.'⁷⁹ To support his argument about the arbitrary nature of the allegations, Roth refers to an anecdotal story from the 1530s, when King Ferdinand of Castille, issued a royal provision that prohibited the enslavement of those allegedly documented as cannibals, and as a result 'the number of official reports, petitions and complaints concerning cannibals, which had radically diminished since the 1520s increased again.'⁸⁰ That was because the exploitation of those dehumanised as cannibals was a profitable enterprise which transformed the New World into a battlefield and a slave market.⁸¹ While Roth does not focus on the gendered dynamics of the colonial settlements, he claims that accusations of cannibalism also legitimised sexual harassments and abuses of the indigenous women since they were supported by claims that 'the victim was a woman of the cannibals.'⁸²

The example of the decree of 1503 shows that the cannibal trope was not only part of the imperial, masculine fantasies but it had a significant political implication as well: it enabled colonial expansion, exploitation, and enslavement. Colonialism was founded upon an arbitrary, systematic bureaucratisation which is presented as legal, through which the other is categorised as foreigner and non-human. This is a foundational feature of modernity and as I have shown is rooted in the imaginary naming of the other as cannibal. The colonisation of

⁷⁶ Roth, 24.

⁷⁷ Roth, 24.

⁷⁸ Roth, 42–43.

⁷⁹ Roth, 43.

⁸⁰ Roth, 44–46.

⁸¹ Roth, 42.

⁸² Roth, 39.

the New World gave an opportunity to the European empires to consolidate the identities of their subjects. The fantasies of cannibalism gave shape to the male imperial Christian subject who, as he is surrounded by threatening cannibalistic figures, was self-proclaimed as non-cannibalistic. While the cannibal trope was a predominant form of othering in European discourse, this is not to say that dissident voices were absent. In literature, we encounter a shift in the colonial history of cannibalism in which the cannibal trope becomes associated with the darker side of imperial masculinity.

2.6 Interlude: Things of Darkness

In his 1580 essay 'Of Cannibals,' the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne, as inspired by the interrogation of three Brazilian Tupinamba members by the king of France in Rouen in 1562, draws a link between the discourse of the monopoly of ferocity on behalf of these cannibals and French ethnocentrism alongside religious fanaticism. Montaigne juxtaposes the tortures occurring during the French Religious wars of his time—which involved dismemberment and feeding of limbs to dogs and pigs—and challenges the grounds on which barbaric and savage demeanour is hypocritically decided as dissociated from colonial violence. This is Montaigne: 'We are justified therefore in calling these people barbarians by reference to the laws of reason, but not in comparison with ourselves, who surpass them in every kind of barbarity.'⁸³ The implication of his argument is that knowledge about the other is indiscernible from knowledge about one's self and as such Montaigne's understanding of cannibalism is weaved upon a space separate from prejudiced Brazilian ethnographies, which instead, functions as a 'black mirror' for the vices, excesses, and violence inherent in modern society.⁸⁴

A similar juxtaposition is played out by William Shakespeare in his final play *The Tempest* (1611). Shakespeare integrates the theme of cannibalism in one of the play's main characters, Caliban (upon whom the most prevalent interpretation was that of an anagram of cannibal)⁸⁵ who represents an exemplar of the non-European subject. The reference to cannibalism becomes the signifier of difference, not only because it is paired with Caliban's semi-human nature

⁸³ Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne, Vol. 1*, trans. Jacob Zeitlin (New York: Knopf, 1934), 114.

⁸⁴ Lestringant, *Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne*, 84–85.

⁸⁵ Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History*, 4th ed. (New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

and savagery but also because Caliban is a transgressive figure who cannot be contained within specific boundaries, and hence, becomes the emblem of ‘morphological ambivalence.’⁸⁶ Prospero finds shelter in Caliban’s island and takes control of him. Their relationship exposes the mutuality of dependency between a European master and the other as monster. The status of sovereignty of the former requires the presence of another as ‘the usurper depends upon the usurped.’⁸⁷ As such, the inherent instability of this power relationship comes to the fore, and towards the end of the play, Prospero acknowledges the fragility of his mastery, claiming Caliban as the only true servant of himself, a property of himself and as such, Caliban’s monstrosity becomes his property:⁸⁸ ‘[T]his thing of darkness I acknowledge mine.’⁸⁹ Shakespeare’s cannibal is sketched as an object for the master’s utility, and a kind of darkness, a spectral entity produced from the master’s discourse to affirm his superiority, as an aspect of the master himself.

The subjugation of the cannibal by a European saviour has often been associated with the self/other binary and the anxieties of its collapse. Cannibalism defines the precariousness of limit. It signifies where the self ends and the other begins, and how easily they are transgressed: that which belongs to me that can never be a property of myself. This theme is ingeniously played out in Daniel Defoe’s famous castaway novel *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719),⁹⁰ in which the Christian slave-trader Crusoe finds himself in the company of a cannibal whom he rescues and names Friday. The interest of this story does not lie so much in the couple’s affairs—which is informed with some of the motifs of the colonial power dynamic—⁹¹as in what preceded the encounter with the cannibals and Crusoe. For years, Crusoe finds himself in a solitary state wandering on an isolated island with no map. Having established that there is no presence of another on his island, the only presence is his own, the only voice he hears is

⁸⁶ Paul Brown, “‘This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine’: The Tempest and the Discourse of Colonialism,” in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 60.

⁸⁷ Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797*, 127.

⁸⁸ Brown, 69.

⁸⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest: The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare*, Vol. 33, ed. John Dover Wilson, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 76.

⁹⁰ Defoe’s novel has inspired similar castaway novels dealing with the themes of desert islands, British imperialism and Christianity, since like *The Coral Island* (1858) and *The Lord of the Flies* (1954).

⁹¹ Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest*, 91–127.

his own along with the echo of his parrot Poll. Until that day Crusoe terrifyingly discovers the existence of a ‘print of a Man’s naked Foot on the Shore’,⁹² unsure about whether the trace is his own or it manifests the presence of another on the island, Crusoe enters a whirlpool of self-doubt, horror and persecution:

I began to persuade myself it was all a Delusion; that it was nothing else but my own Foot, and why might not I come that way from the Boat, as well as I was going that way to the Boat [...] and that if at last this was only the Print of my own Foot, I had play’d the Part of those Fools, who strive to make stories of Spectres, and Apparitions; and then are frighted at them more than anybody.⁹³

Crusoe’s solitude produces presence as spectre, the identity of the other as a trace of a ghost, a delusion, and a fantasy. Ironically, throughout the novel, his island is only populated by himself and cannibals: men and their monsters.

2.7 The Curious Incident with the Maoris on Board

Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, the proliferation of visual images, paintings, and novels played a fundamental role in the distribution of groups indulging in cannibalistic feasts and dismemberments, systematically entwined with extermination and enslavement. However, by the 18th century, European Enlightenment ideas about the rational human subject and the increase of colonial explorations meant that the stories about cannibal ogres did not hold the same validity. As colonial contact became more frequent, and European missionaries and explorers were in greater proximity with indigenous groups, the fantasies of devouring creatures gave their place to the emerging discourses about differences as established on the grounds of nature or culture,⁹⁴ and justifications of savagery related to the emerging concept of race.⁹⁵

⁹² Daniel Dafoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. Thomas Keymer, 3rd ed., Oxford World’s Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 142.

⁹³ Dafoe, 145–46.

⁹⁴ For instance, Roxanne Wheeler argued that in the 18th century Britain, justification around human variety shifted from cultural factors like religion and governance systems towards an emphasis to the human body and its features (shape of head, colour of skin, hair texture). Roxanne Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

⁹⁵ Patrick Bratlinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011); Ann Laura Stoler, “Cultivating Bourgeois Bodies and Racial Selves,” in *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 87–119.

In a remarkable account about the production of Polynesian cannibalism, Gananath Obeyesekere argues that the best-selling narratives of the British navigator Captain James Cook about the most famous and ferocious cannibals, the Maori and the Fiji, were fuelled, on the one hand, by the readiness of European audiences to devour cannibal stories, and on the other hand, by the increasing frequency of shipboard and shipwreck anthropophagy cases among European sailors that created the possibility that even in good conscience, fellow crew members might resort to eating human flesh for survival.⁹⁶ During the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe, anthropophagy at sea became a frequent practice under extreme conditions of shipwrecks, or on-board famine but survivors were not punished with manslaughter, and instead, anthropophagy was an exigent part of sea customs law.⁹⁷ Whilst European shipwreck anthropophagy could be justified as imposed by survival needs, Aboriginal cannibalism was invested with assumptions of ferocity and savagery. In other words, it was not because of the act of consuming human flesh per se that cannibalism became

a sign for something that had to be forced to cease. This is best exemplified in the 1840 *Treaty of Waitangi* according to which New Zealand was declared a British colony and the Maori inhabitants were subjugated to the British crown. The Treaty ordered the abandonment of cannibalistic practices, and as a result, the 1840s is considered the date marking the ‘end of Maori cannibalism,’ and the beginning of their submissiveness to the crown.⁹⁸ This political, judicial, and bureaucratic control of the island was prepared by the accounts of Maoris as cannibals and Cook’s ethnography—despite being embedded in a series of cultural misunderstandings, colonial power, and fantasy—was instrumental in this regard.

⁹⁶ Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*, 40.

⁹⁷ Simpson mentions extensively the following cases: In 1710, the *Nottingham Galley* sank near the Caribbean, eleven members survived, they killed and ate a 44 year-old man. In 1737, the slave-ship *Mary* sank near the Canary Islands, four Englishmen, two Portuguese, and an American escaped via a raft, they survived after killing and eating the Portuguese man. In 1759, the *Dolpin* ran out of resources causing great shipboard famine. Lots were cast, and a Spanish man was killed and eaten. In 1765, famine on board led the crew to cast lots, a black man was killed and eaten. In 1766, another ship the *Tiger* sank and the surviving members killed a young black man and ate him. In all of these cases, no conviction for murder or anthropophagy occurred until the 1884 the famous case of the *Mignonette* in which the two survivors of the shipwreck, having killed and eaten a black man, were sentenced (a sentence which was reversed shortly after since the act was justified by the extreme conditions of hunger and the need for survival). Simpson, “Cannibals at Common Law.”

⁹⁸ Obeyesekere, “Cannibal Feasts in Nineteenth-Century Fiji: Seamen’s Yarns and the Ethnographic Imagination,” 64.

One striking example illustrating the production of Maori cannibals comes from 1773 and the second voyage of Captain Cook in New Zealand (1772-1775). The incident began when some men from Cook's ship—which was anchored for repairs—went ashore to trade artefacts with the natives. This was a common practice for the purposes of collecting trophies such as human skulls and bones as well as other paraphernalia from the South Seas which were either traded or sent to museums and anthropology departments for scientific anatomical research in Britain and America.⁹⁹ When inland, the sailors found the head, the heart, and the intestines of a young boy forked on a stick, they bought the head and decided to invite a handful of men on-board to test the Maori's anthropophagic preferences. They carved a piece of human flesh from the human head and cooked it, then offered it to one native who 'devour'd it most ravenously and suck'd his fingers half a dozen times.'¹⁰⁰ When Captain Cook returned to the ship, he heard of the incident and ordered the repeat of the experiment which was met with great 'scientific success:' since one Maori devoured ravenously the piece of human flesh, there was no doubt that they were cannibals.¹⁰¹

Reflecting on the method of objective experimentation and observation, what appears to be startling is firstly the presupposition and then the generalisation of the accusation of cannibalism, judging from the response of one Maori native, and attributing it to all of them. Secondly, the problematic execution of the

experiment which does not take into consideration other possible explanations. For example, Cook and the crew members did not take into consideration the native as having an agency, and as such responding—out of fear, mockery, politeness, or some other unknown reason—not to a British *experiment* but to an *offer* of a snack.¹⁰² More importantly, I want to highlight the profound prominence given to the scientific validation and certainty about the practices of cannibalism. The experiment put an end to any possibilities of controversy around Maori cannibalism. This is Cook's conclusion: 'That the New Zealanders are Cannibals can now *no longer be doubted*, the account I gave of it in my former Voyage was partly founded on circumstances and was, as I afterwards found,

⁹⁹ Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*, 43–44.

¹⁰⁰ Obeyesekere, 31.

¹⁰¹ Obeyesekere, 31.

¹⁰² For example, another explanation would be that 'the Maori eating cannibal steaks with seeming relish and with seeming fun [...] was based on the fear-knowledge that the British were cannibals and hence *expected* the Maori to eat what was offered to them.' Obeyesekere, 36.

discredited by many people.¹⁰³ Observation marked cannibalism as a practice that could not be challenged; on the contrary the affirmation of pre-contact Maori cannibalism became indisputable and incompatible with doubt. After Cook's voyages, several cases of shipwrecks near New Zealand were accompanied with reports of Maori consuming the surviving Europeans, fostering the idea that 'Maori would eat anyone whenever circumstances were favourable,' even though 'there was no evidence supporting such presumption.'¹⁰⁴ The intolerance towards any obscurity surrounding cannibalistic practices was necessary in order to sustain the fantasy of the Maori as cannibal because the presence of a consistently threatening other informed colonial expansion and exploitation, and more importantly, fed into forms of racial harassment against Europe's inner cannibals.

2.8 The Cannibal Club

It was not without controversy that sensational narratives of cannibalism were produced. Some early British ethnographers challenged these accounts¹⁰⁵ marking an intricate contradiction within the emerging anthropological discipline between 'liberalism on the one hand, and imperialism and racism on the other.'¹⁰⁶ The most iconic paradigm of this ideological and political incongruity is reflected in the last episode of this genealogy, demonstrating that cannibal fantasies do not only belong in the sphere of colonial otherness but they have also penetrated into the sphere of European science as the history of the foundation of the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) in Britain in 1871 outlines.¹⁰⁷

Prior to the establishment of the RAI, two scientific societies, the Ethnological Society of London (ESL) and the Anthropological Society of London (ASL), engaged in a clash over the descent and the unity of humankind and ideas around

¹⁰³ Cook quoted on: Obeyesekere, 32. My emphasis

¹⁰⁴ Obeyesekere, 124.

¹⁰⁵ See for example the case of Lorimer Fison. Bratlinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians*.

¹⁰⁶ Bratlinger, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Initially known as 'the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland' it became known as the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1907 Henrika Kuklick, "The British Tradition," in *A New History of Anthropology*, ed. Henrika Kuklick (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), 55..

race.¹⁰⁸ The ESL followed a liberal anti-slavery political tradition, supporting humanitarianism. Most of its members were ‘committed Darwinians,’ and believed in the unity of humankind.¹⁰⁹ The two groups held their meetings in the same building and often exchanged papers,¹¹⁰ but by late 1860 the ASL had 636 members compared to the 230 of the ESL (two of them were women), and 29 members were shared among both societies.¹¹¹ While ethnologists (ESL) denoted emphasis on studying the nature and conditions of developmental stages, anthropologists (ASL) were concerned with differences in physical characteristics. Members of the ASL embraced the view that there was anatomical and physiological evidence (especially in the shape and form of the cranium) that indicated Blacks as a different and inferior species.¹¹² While the members of the ASL passionately celebrated racist ideas (for example, that black slaves were constitutionally unsuitable to be free)¹¹³ this is not to argue that racism was unknown among the ESL, either. For example, one of the prominent ESL figures Thomas Huxley (famously known as ‘Darwin’s bulldog’) found the possibility of racial equality between blacks and whites ‘so hopelessly absurd as to be unworthy of serious discussion.’¹¹⁴ But, perhaps, the most distinct differentiation between the two societies was a matter of style, that is, an issue where the cannibal trope played a determining role.

Part of the ASL was an inner clique called ‘The Cannibal Club’ which functioned as a space that eschewed the standards of scientific activity and respectability of the time.¹¹⁵ The ‘Cannibal Club’ was an elitist and reactionary sub-group of

¹⁰⁸ Kuklick, “The British Tradition”; George W. Stocking Jr., “What’s in a Name? The Origins of the Royal Anthropological Institute (1837-71),” *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Man, 6, no. 3 (1971): 369–90.

¹⁰⁹ This meant that all humans belong to the same species, the developmental stages are the same for all human groups, the direction of evolution is the same, but only the pace is different.

¹¹⁰ Stocking Jr., “What’s in a Name? The Origins of the Royal Anthropological Institute (1837-71),” 378.

¹¹¹ Marc Flandreau, *Anthropologists in the Stock Exchange: A Financial History of Victorian Science* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 55.

¹¹² Stocking Jr., “What’s in a Name? The Origins of the Royal Anthropological Institute (1837-71),” 379. It is important to mention here that skin pigmentation was not necessary for the racial differentiation, as Irish were also considered racially inferior. Stocking Jr., “What’s in a Name? The Origins of the Royal Anthropological Institute (1837-71).”

¹¹³ Kuklick, “The British Tradition,” 54.

¹¹⁴ Flandreau, *Anthropologists in the Stock Exchange: A Financial History of Victorian Science*, 49.

¹¹⁵ Stocking Jr., “What’s in a Name? The Origins of the Royal Anthropological Institute (1837-71).”

the ASL which collected and translated pornographic literature¹¹⁶ and promoted colonial ‘land-grabbing’ through a scheme of settling debts (mostly in South American and African countries) through exchange for private land.¹¹⁷ At a time when gentlemen’s clubs were flooding London, the sub-group mockingly disregarded the canons of gentlemanship through their provocative self-styling as ‘cannibals’ and the display of a ‘savage’s’ skeleton in their front window.¹¹⁸ The club was fed with artefacts, photographs, and skulls from local secretaries in the British colonies,¹¹⁹ and notoriously gavelled to order by a ‘mace in the form of a Negro head.’¹²⁰ To my knowledge, there is no bibliographical reference on why they self-proclaimed themselves as members of the ‘Cannibal Club’, however, I would argue that their overall effort to establish an intimidating quality of the club is indicative of the equivocal nature of the cannibal trope: attractive and loathsome, powerful and greedy.

The two societies merged in 1871, during Thomas Huxley’s presidency, in what was considered a triumph of the ESL,¹²¹ and although many of the racist views of the ASL were institutionally repressed after the fusion, these controversies shaped the history of British anthropology.¹²² The name of the ‘anthropological’ was maintained—despite the outcry of prominent ESL members (e.g. Lubbock)—not only as a ‘dialectical offshoot’¹²³ and as part of the arrangements to guarantee the representation of both societies,¹²⁴ but also, ironically, because the ‘Cannibal Club’ had left an unpaid financial debt under the ASL which could not be extinguished through the merging.

2.9 Conclusion

When the cannibal trope becomes appropriated by a group of bourgeois colonialists like the ‘Cannibal Club’ members, we witness who has the power and the right to designate and represent ‘cannibals,’ exposing the arbitrariness of

¹¹⁶ Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 91–92.

¹¹⁷ Flandreau.

¹¹⁸ Stocking, 380.

¹¹⁹ Flandreau, *Anthropologists in the Stock Exchange: A Financial History of Victorian Science*, 55.

¹²⁰ Stocking, 380.

¹²¹ Kuklick, “The British Tradition.”

¹²² Stocking.

¹²³ Stocking, 384.

¹²⁴ Kuklick, “The British Tradition,” 55.

this representation. The ‘Cannibal Club’ highjacked the term and from a signifier of the non-human status of the Aboriginal it became a signifier for inhumane, demoralising and supercilious capitalistic greed. Therefore, paradoxically they exposed that this trope is a cultural construct and raised questions that have haunted anthropology, and European epistemologies in general namely ‘who authorises colonial representation.’¹²⁵ The genealogy of the cannibal trope exposes the blindness and the denial of the inherent violence of European scientific discourses, institutions and epistemologies. More importantly, it brings to the fore how the vestiges of the cannibal trope in the history of anthropology pulse at the heart of the institutional history of anthropology and colonial history.

Overall, this genealogy has shown that the cannibal trope sealed pre-modern formulations of anthropophagy and transformed a fear of otherness into the colonial configuration of race. Race was consolidated through science, observation and anthropology and became the signifier of a displacement: a category that translates an archaic fear of otherness into a natural, physical and material truth—the existence of cannibals. The cannibal trope has exposed that being racialised signifies a form of otherness that is ‘other enough’ so that its consumption (appropriation, annihilation) does not mean the breaking of a taboo. Human flesh consumption, thus, in the white imaginary, is prohibited precisely because the white body cannot be objectified; it is considered ‘human’, whereas the black one can be exploited, enslaved, raped, imprisoned, traded, killed without transgressing the ethics of Western civilisation. This is why when in his work *Totem and Taboo* Sigmund Freud argued that Western civilisation has repressed the memory of a prehistoric act of cannibalism and is founded upon this violence, he made an important intervention in European ethics and the colonial subjectivity. But this is to be explored in the chapter that follows.

¹²⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *The MIT Press*, October, 28, no. Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis (Spring 1984): 131.

CHAPTER THREE

Freud and the Cannibal: Race, Religion, Anti-Semitism in Psychoanalysis

3.1 Introduction

In his 1977 work *Violence and the Sacred*, Rene Girard writes that ‘we are perhaps more distracted by incest than by cannibalism, but only because cannibalism has not yet found its Freud and been promoted to the status of a major contemporary myth.’¹ Girard claims that Freud’s intervention elevated incest into the founding myth of the psychoanalytic subject. Yet, incest’s credence among psychoanalysts did not only serve its designation as a major contemporary mythology. Girard also implies that in finding its way into psychoanalysis, incest became a troubling and disturbing human desire diverting our attention away from another one; the question of cannibalism. The claim here can be read as an epistemological critique to psychoanalysis which plays into another major myth: Freudian psychoanalysis’ fixation with sexuality. Psychoanalysis’ lack of engagement with desires of annihilation and consumption has contributed to the silencing of cannibalism as another meaningful mythology, which according to Girard, symbolises the violence of integration of foreign members into a community. While psychoanalysis exposed incestuous desires at the heart of subjectivity, it unwittingly left cannibalistic ones unspoken and unaccounted for. Echoing the anthropological critiques on the question of cannibalism mushrooming in the 1970s, Girard highlighted the startling absence of human sacrifice and consumption amongst the taboos that shape psychoanalysis. In this chapter, I argue otherwise: Freud had in fact found cannibalism, but he uncovered what was, for his contemporaries, an uncomfortable proximity between cannibalism and Christian community. Hence, his argument was necessarily silenced and has been ever since.

Freud’s first substantial discussion of cannibalism can be found in his 1913 text *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, in the context of the father-son antagonism throughout humanity’s

¹ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 277.

prehistory.² Freud believed that, by exploring the cultural and religious structures of Australian Aboriginals, one could illuminate the nature of their psychological mechanisms, which could thence be traced back to humanity's prehistory. Freud was not seeking to produce a comparison about what is common in the psychology of the black Aboriginal and the European neurotic as the subtitle of the work indicates. However, he was looking for what is commonly repressed, denied or blocked out in both groups. In drawing on anthropological theses to consider the unconscious structures of the human psyche, *Totem and Taboo* marks one of the first psychosocial works of psychoanalysis.

However, *Totem and Taboo* was not the first work where the theme of cannibalistic wishes was articulated. In his 1900 work *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud took cues from the Ancient Greek myth of Kronos to describe the psychology of the father-son dynamics. While Kronos the despotic patriarch devours his children 'just as the wild boar devours the sow's litter,' to impede being overthrown his son Zeus punishes him by castration.³ In this context, paternal cannibalism is counterbalanced with filial emasculation which Freud mistakenly attributes to Zeus (Zeus overthrew but did not castrate his father), a slip which Freud later utilised to expose the truth-revealing aspect of the wrong recollection of the myth.⁴ For Freud, even if the father is a pompous cannibal, the castrator son will eventually oppose and defeat him, exposing, through this act, the inevitable genealogical succession and the inextricable vulnerability of the paternal position—fathers are meant to be dethroned.⁵ In *Totem and Taboo*, as we will see, the racial subtext in the father-son relationship is reversed, and it is the son who becomes the cannibal. Perhaps then, to examine the relation between psychoanalysis and race, the question that needs to be asked is not only how colonial imagery carried along racial implications that shaped the psychoanalytic subject, but also why it was deployed in the first place. Why did Freud willingly engage in the perpetuation of a colonialist smear, and why at that particular historical moment?

² Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. James Strachey, 6th ed., vol. XIII, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953).

³ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 274.

⁴ Warner, "Fee Fie Fo Fum: The Child in the Jaws of the Story," 177.

⁵ Warner, 177.

By approaching his engagement with the cannibal trope from an epistemological as well as a historical perspective, a crucial methodological issue emerges: this is a problem that plagues historical approaches outside historiography. It is whether in considering *Totem and Taboo* within a web of socio-political, cultural, and personal dynamics one not only explains but also explains the racism *away*. Norman O. Brown, a marginal American philosopher who produced a very powerful critique of Freudian theory in the 1950s, cast a useful distinction between psychohistory as a tool leading to a deeper understanding of an author's work, or, as a 'perverted argumentation' concealing aspects that insult contemporary morals and aim at the ethical cleansing of a theorist's most disagreeable aspects.⁶ It is by widely acknowledging the tension invoked by historicising psychoanalysis that the examination of the cannibal trope in Freud's theory can refrain from idealisation and tarnish, and do justice to the tensions between colonialist and post-colonial implications of psychoanalysis.

Keeping these questions in mind, I examine how Freud utilises cannibalism to designate a racialised order of savagery that both informs and threatens civilisation. By historically situating *Totem and Taboo* in the genesis of the psychoanalytic institution and the politics that accompanied it, I argue that another layer of analysis emerges: the cannibal trope becomes an anti-Semitic intervention motivated by Freud's fatherly, complex, and antagonistic relationship with Carl Jung. This historical context is fundamental to understanding why Freud developed this colonial imagery and situated it at the core of European civilisation and the psychoanalytic subject. Subsequently, I examine how the trope was carried forward in psychoanalytic theory and history, and became attached to Freud's theories of aggression, identification, and religion. Overall, the argument is that although Freud used the cannibal trope to decentre anti-Semitic Christian subjectivity, in doing so, he also perpetuated a colonial dichotomy between the civilised and the cannibal that relied on the racialisation of a non-European other. In this sense, the cannibal trope in Freud's work retained an unresolved relation to Western hegemonic subjectivity, Christianity and colonialism—which is why, as is noted by Girard, it is a commonly held view that Freud only engaged with the taboo of incest, but not with that of cannibalism.

⁶ Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*, 2nd ed. (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 181.

3.2 Race, Racism and anti-Semitism: Psychoanalysis and the Colonial Imagination

When examining psychoanalysis in relation to colonial racism, we must take into consideration that psychoanalysis has been, from its genesis, a marginalised theory and practice. Originally developed by Sigmund Freud and a small circle of Jewish physicians, psychoanalysis emerged amidst an intensely hostile, anti-Semitic social context and was unavoidably shaped by it. In his book *Freud, Race and Gender*, Sander Gilman contends that Vienna was ‘the most anti-Semitic city in Europe’ and therefore, race and racial difference were concepts with concrete impact and direct influence on Freud’s psychoanalytic thinking.⁷ ‘As an ‘Eastern’ Jew in ‘Western’ Vienna,’ Sander Gilman writes, Freud ‘saw himself as the Other, at least in his perception of the world.’⁸ In the anti-Semitic Christian imagery, the Jew’s otherness was inscribed on his body as much as in his character: Jews were considered more carnal, associated with impurity, dirt, hysteria, and madness. Moreover, a common slur of the late 19th century was that Jews had ‘no language at all,’ and hence were Calibans—such as the cannibal hero from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*—‘reduced to the level of the beast.’⁹ Daniel Boyarin argues that the alleged carnality of the Jews was manufactured to contrast Christian spirituality, a distinction which was also transferred against the body of the colonised, that is, ‘one of the prime figures that will be carried forward into the thematics of colonialism, with Christian remaining in place and “the savage” being substituted for the Jew.’¹⁰

The widespread anti-Semitic ideology affected both the content and the institutional politics of psychoanalysis. Freud rejected attempts to label psychoanalysis in racial terms because of its Jewish origins. In a letter to his Hungarian colleague Sandor Ferenczi in 1911, he writes: ‘There will surely be different world views [...] here and there. But there should be no distinct Aryan or Jewish science. Their results should be identical; only their presentation might vary.’¹¹ Freud’s emphasis on infantile sexuality had put him at odds with his Swiss and Christian colleagues who considered any engagement with the body as a

⁷ Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 15.

⁸ Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, 215.

⁹ Daniel Boyarin, “Épater L’Embourgeoisement: Freud, Gender, and the (De)Colonized Psyche,” *Diacritics*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 24, no. 1 (1994): 34.

¹⁰ Boyarin, 34.

¹¹ Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, Revised (New York and London: Norton, 2006), 239.

manifestation of the Jewish obsession with carnality. As George Makari notes, ‘whispers had it that Maeder would dignify the claim that the Jews in Vienna were overly concerned with sex—’¹²Alfonse Maeder being a psychoanalyst and a close collaborator of Carl Jung and Eugen Bleuler, the leading psychiatrist and the director of the Burghölzli psychiatric clinic in Zurich respectively. However, despite these subtle tensions Freud acknowledged that the only possibility to safeguard the future of psychoanalysis was to disassociate it from its Jewish origins, and for this reason, he appointed his Swiss Christian colleague and friend Carl Jung as the first President of the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA), founded in 1910.

It was Jung who seemed to Freud to ‘bring salvation to psychoanalysis from a seemingly Jewish insularity by opening doors to the Swiss and to the gentile world. In return, Freud was willing to bestow upon him ‘the mantle of apostolic succession.’¹³ Ignoring Jung’s grandiosity and anti-Semitism, and thereby “assigning him the IPA Presidency, Freud believed, was the necessary evil to counter the popular anti-Semitic resistance to psychoanalysis.¹⁴ At the same time, Freud paradoxically situated racial difference within psychoanalysis’ institutional history since his choice for the presidency was motivated by the marginal place of psychoanalysis. Jung’s gradual theoretical differentiation from Freud’s tenets is translated by Freud into a racial conflict and becomes amalgamated in the principal myth of *Totem and Taboo*—where the sons murder and devour the father to annihilate him, as a historical allegory of the birth of the social. Jung’s publication of *Transformations and Symbols of Libido* in 1911 began to foreshadow the imminent rupture of the two men. In this work, Jung substituted Freud’s focus on infantile sexuality with the invocation to expand psychoanalysis beyond the individual to the realm of myths.¹⁵ Jung aspired to explain how cultural symbolisms were responsible for the formation of a ‘collective spirit:’ a uniformity of the human unconscious. Myths offered access to the finite arsenal

¹² George Makari, *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis* (London: Duckworth, 2008), 276.

¹³ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 41.

¹⁴ Stephen Frosh, *Hate and the Jewish Science: Anti-Semitism, Nazism and Psychoanalysis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 43.

¹⁵ Carl J. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia*, Vol. 5, trans. R.F.C. Hull, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 1986).

of unconscious ‘primordial images’¹⁶ (a term which in 1919 was substituted by the concept of the ‘archetype’).¹⁷ Towards the end of *Transformations* Jung argues that the prototypical psychoanalytic self must be understood through the Christian concept of *homoousios* (that is, of the same substance); man is made in accordance to Jesus’ image: ‘[F]rom the point of view of psychology and comparative religion,’ Jung writes, ‘Christ [...] is a typical manifestation of the self.’¹⁸ ‘The self is an *imago Dei*,’ it is made in accordance with God’s image and ‘cannot be distinguished from it empirically.’¹⁹ Where Freud had emphasised infantile sexuality and sexual libidinal energy as driving and decentering the subject, Jung juxtaposed a non-sexual account of psychoanalytic subjectivity; he regarded libido as a ‘neutral force’ resembling ‘appetite like hunger and thirst’²⁰ and found in the figure of Jesus a model for unconscious struggles. Having read the manuscript twice and in the caring tone their relationship entertained at that point, Freud wrote to Jung the following November 1911: ‘One of the nicest works I have read (again) is of a well-known author on the *Transformations and Symbols of Libido*’ and added that ‘[S]ometimes I have a feeling that his horizon has been too narrowed by Christianity.’²¹ Remarkably, the letter ended with a spirited condemnation of a father who becomes drawn (or even seduced) by the playfulness of his son: ‘Why in God’s name did I allow myself to follow you into this field?’²² Jung’s *Transformations* posed a provocation to Freud to follow a form of ‘wild analysis,’ but unlike Jung, he did not pursue a comparative psychoanalytic study in myths and religion, having turned to anthropological evidence about non-European cultures instead.

Freud’s turn to British anthropology should be understood primarily in relation to Jung’s turn to mysticism, that is, his appropriation of the Christian self and departure from the kind of material grounding on the body that Freud had painstakingly managed to establish. Until 1911, when Freud began working on the four essays comprising *Totem and Taboo*, he had been preoccupied with

¹⁶ Sonu Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology: The Dream of A Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 297.

¹⁷ Shamdasani, 302.

¹⁸ Jung, 392.

¹⁹ Jung, 392.

²⁰ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia*, 131.

²¹ Sigmund Freud, “Letter from Sigmund Freud to Carl Jung, November 12, 1911.” *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence Between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, 1911, 457-459.

²² Freud, 459.

the psychopathology of everyday life²³ and the role of infantile sexuality in the development of neurosis, as outlined in *The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, published in 1905.²⁴ His writings on infantile sexuality demonstrated that although fantasy was essentially of importance in the development of neurosis, so were actual events in the individual's life. As Eliza Slavet has noted the questions of materiality versus fantasy, history versus mysticism, and sexuality versus spirituality lay at the core of Freud and Jung's divergence. Especially after Jung's publication of *Transformations* Freud understood that Jung 'was no longer mired in the reality of childhood sexuality—he had moved beyond the literal actuality of Freudian psychoanalysis.'²⁵ This is why, while in the first three essays of *Totem and Taboo* Freud mostly draws on anthropology and discusses the parallels between cultural rituals in Aboriginal tribes of New Zealand, Australia, and Melanesia along with European psychoanalytic patients, the final essay mainly focuses on anthropology of religion, and makes a detour through humanity's prehistory to ascribe a common historical origin of all cultures in the primal myth.²⁶ At bottom, because Jung leaned heavily on mysticism and spirituality, Freud juxtaposed the figure of the Aboriginal as a historically-grounded model for the psychoanalytic self. Therefore, through the representation of racial difference in *Totem and Taboo* another racial tension is managed, as Jacqueline Rose puts it, '[b]ehind Freud and Jung's engagement with sacrifice and ritual, in which they were equally—and equally passionately—involved we already discover the barely concealed conflict between the Aryan and the Jew.'²⁷ In this sense, it becomes impossible to examine the discourse of race in *Totem and Taboo* separately from the wider context of anti-Semitism that surrounded its publication.

In *Totem and Taboo*'s preface Freud clearly outlines the two strands of knowledge

²³ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2010 [1900]); Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VIII* (1905): *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, 1-247.

²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, ed. Anna Freud and James Strachey, vol. 7, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1974).

²⁵ Eliza Slavet, *Racial Fever: Freud and the Jewish Question* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 56.

²⁶ Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*.

²⁷ Jacqueline Rose, "Freud in the 'Tropics,'" *History Workshop Journal*, Oxford University Press, 47 (1999): 52.

to which the work responds: Wilhelm Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie* and the Zurich School's work on social psychology (Carl Jung is mentioned in a parenthesis), and their emphasis on myths and language for the crafting of a theory of individual psychology.²⁸ With these in mind, the following section traces discourses of human sacrifice and consumption in European anthropological texts, exploring how they informed Freud's arguments in *Totem and Taboo*.

3.2.1 Austrian and German Anthropology

In Vienna, the chair of anthropology was not established until 1913—the year in which the final essay of *Totem and Taboo* was published. Prior to that date, anthropological research was conducted in the context of the Austrian Anthropological Society, which was founded in 1870 (one year before the British Royal Anthropological Institution), and had strong ties with the German one. Particularly after 1889 the two societies held joint meetings in Vienna.²⁹ The most influential Viennese anthropologist—to whom the first chair of anthropology was given—was Rudolf Pöch, a Berlin-trained anthropologist who in the 1900s undertook two extended fieldwork projects in New Guinea and South Africa, and aimed to produce a form of racial anthropology, consisting of an array of collected evidence: photographs, films and recordings.³⁰ This emerging racial science, emphasising the physical, facial, and morphological characteristics of humans to associate racial variety with racial inequality, sat well with contemporary social debates about the concept of national character and groupings, having supplied the grounds for a scientifically approved racist and anti-Semitic ideology which developed mainly after 1913.³¹ During the First World War, Pöch led a project of Viennese and German anthropologists engaging in a tedious and bureaucratic collection of data and all other necessary information suitable for statistical evaluation and categorisation from detainees in camps and prisons.³² Pöch

²⁸ Freud, XIII:xiii.

²⁹ Margit Berner, "From "Prisoner of War Studies" to Proof of Paternity: Racial Anthropologists and the Measuring of "Others" in Austria," in *"Blood and Homeland": Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*, ed. Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2007), 41–42.

³⁰ Maria Teschler-Nicola, "Volksdeutsche and Racial Anthropology in Interwar Vienna: The 'Marienfeld Project,'" in *"Blood and Homeland": Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*, ed. Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2007), 57.

³¹ Berner, "From "Prisoner of War Studies" to Proof of Paternity: Racial Anthropologists and the Measuring of "Others" in Austria." 46.

³² Berner, 46.

died in 1921 and was succeeded by Father Schmidt, an anti-Semitic pastor who overshadowed Viennese anthropology for the years to come.³³ In short, both German and Viennese anthropologists were preoccupied with ‘racial science’ and ‘racial biology,’ namely the documentation and cataloguing of physical differences to confirm racial hierarchy. The implication is that the Viennese anthropological society was far from an objective scientific circle disinterested in politics. On the contrary, the anthropological discipline was sustained by a racist ideology: it both informed and was informed by discourses around the nation-state, and as to the methods whereby the national ‘biological capital’ could be preserved.³⁴

Opposed to the category of race was that of the *Volk* (people). In Germany, since the mid-19th century, a field of psychological studies had gained significant ground and entertained a great theoretical dissemination among both German and French sociologists (Max Weber, Werner Sombart, Emile Durkheim, to name a few).³⁵ *Völkerpsychologie* stood as an alternative to the racialized anthropological studies and aimed at the investigation of national character by unpacking the laws of human development from a psychological point of view, thus moving away from the inscription of difference on the body and physical characteristics. Through the study of myths, customs, and languages, the aim of *Völkerpsychologie* was to trace the nature of the ‘cultural spirit’—the way in which cultural advances were shaped upon the sum of past talented individuals. *Völkerpsychologie* was a liberal scientific approach aiming at disengaging the concept of race from the study of culture, and as such, it regarded humans as complex entities that could not be compartmentalised and studied in isolation. They rather had to be studied within the conditions of a national and cultural group.³⁶ The term *Völkerpsychologie* was coined by Moritz Lazarus in 1851, an emancipated, liberal Jew who along with his friend and brother-in-law Heymann Steinthal set the foundations for cultural and community studies in Germany, and the association of an academic project with a political program to publicly combat anti-Semitism and debate the national assimilation of Jewish Germans (against conversion to Christianity).³⁷ Both Lazarus and Steinthal aimed to bridge

³³ In a letter to Arnold Zweig on the 30th of September 1934, Freud wrote that Father Schmidt was responsible for the ban of the Italian version of the *Review of Psychoanalysis*. Sigmund Freud, “Letter from Sigmund Freud to Arnold Zweig, September 30, 1934,” 1934. *Letters of Sigmund Freud 1873-1939*, 421-423.

³⁴ Berner, 7.

³⁵ Klautke, *The Mind of the Nation: Völkerpsychologie in Germany, 1851–1955*, 75–77.

³⁶ Klautke, 66.

³⁷ Klautke, 22–27.

the gap between philosophical idealism on the one hand, and the depersonalising characters of anthropology and ethnology on the other, by means of their idea of individual psychology studied through the collective. However, none of them escaped the idealisation of the Jewish spirit, and as such, they remained gripped by the anti-Semitic politics of their time—none of them managed to break the ‘glass ceiling’ and become full members of German academia.³⁸

Wilhelm Wundt, a professor at the University of Leipzig since 1875, inherited their project, and expanded the concept of folk psychology by including the study of language, the analysis of myths, forms of religious thought, customs, morals and politics. In his 1912 work *Elemente der Völkerpsychologie*³⁹ (a work Freud drew upon in *Totem and Taboo*), Wundt proposed that cultural diversity was not an issue of racial difference, but of collective creation of the community, that is, the folk. The ‘folk soul’ was a form of a collective spirit that was responsible for the formation of the people’s character while informing art, religion, and language.⁴⁰ Wundt valued the role of the collective more than the individual, and as a result, he regarded products of the community such as morals, myths, and language as the keys to understand individual psychology. Wundt’s work was based on a liberal epistemological framework that relied on the idea of progress and evolution, and regarded mankind as *not* split in different races, unlike many Austrian and German anthropologists tried to do. While this view challenged racial hierarchies, by allowing the comparative study of cultures, it created yet a different version of asymmetry. However, the most important implication of *Völkerpsychologie* perhaps was that, although it produced an alternative to the racist anthropological theories, it failed to take the body into account. Culture and cultural difference were in many ways products of the mind that is, of language, mythology, and morals. Wundt’s emphasis on the symbolic structures was very influential for Carl Jung, since *Völkerpsychologie* informed Jung’s idea of the ‘primordial images’ and enabled him to consider myths as exemplars of an archaic and inherited collective memory, which through cross-cultural parallels—how the same symbols appear in different cultures—confirmed the hypothesis

³⁸ Klautke, 15.

³⁹ In this work, Wundt refers to Fraser, Morgan, Spencer, and Gillen, all British anthropologists thanks to their work on comparative methodology in the study of marriage and in particular the Australian phenomenon of group marriage as a transitional stage between promiscuity and monogamy. Wilhelm Wundt, *Elements of Folk Psychology* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1916), 38.

⁴⁰ Klautke, *The Mind of the Nation: Völkerpsychologie in Germany, 1851–1955*, 68.

of a finite unconscious container, as removed from physical materiality.⁴¹ For example, both Jung and Wundt believed that the feelings of aversion to incest were enforced by the existence of a cultural prohibition disregarding any psychological or biological explanation: humans were culturally trained to feel disgusted by incestuous wishes.⁴² In a letter from August 2, 1912, shortly before their separation, Jung wrote to Freud that it is 'highly unlikely that primitive man ever passed through an era of incest. Rather it would appear that the first manifestation of incestuous desire was the prohibition itself.'⁴³ Freud had a different view.

3.2.2 British Anthropology

While German anthropology was primarily preoccupied with the mind and the cultural connections of the folk, British anthropology was widely dependent on biological and evolutionary narratives that explained cultural difference in racial and temporal terms. As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, liberal British anthropologists took their cue from Charles Darwin and argued that human race was one, unified, and equipped with the same mental capacities. As the historian of Victorian anthropology George Stocking has shown, amongst the most liberal strands of British anthropology cultural difference was not biologically given but was the result of temporal transformations: the human races could be found in distinct measurable evolutionary scales that range from savagery to civilisation.⁴⁴

Sir Edward Tylor's 1871 work *Primitive Culture* is one of the best-known in this tradition.⁴⁵ Reviewing material collected from administrators and missionaries who lived with indigenous people under colonial settlements, Tylor produced a comparative account of the evolutionary development of humankind. He believed that the European intelligentsia was the most culturally advanced group of people and were the historical product of transformations from so-called primitive cultures. Hence European and American intellectuals settled 'a standard by simply placing its own nation at one end of the social scale and

⁴¹ Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology: The Dream of A Science*.

⁴² Wilhelm Wundt, *Elements of Folk Psychology* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1916), 151–52.

⁴³ Carl G. Jung, "Letter from C.G. Jung to Sigmund Freud August 2, 1912." *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence Between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, 512.

⁴⁴ George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York& London: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1987).

⁴⁵ Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, 6th ed., vol. 1, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1920).

the savage tribes on the other, arranging the rest of mankind within these limits according as they correspond to savage or to cultured life.⁴⁶ European civilisation manifested the overall direction of humanity's progress, and, what Tylor took as his task was to classify cultural artefacts such as linguistic phenomena, myths, physiological features (type of brains, bone structures and so on) in order to manufacture the stages in this evolutionary scale. Tylor developed the idea that previous cultural systems can be accessed by examining relics in contemporary cultures of so-called savages. He therefore utilised the 'doctrine of survivals' to show that the past makes itself known through cultural relics: 'processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society.'⁴⁷ The doctrine of survivals challenged notions of progress and linearity as well as the distinct and solid classification of evolutionary stages. Similar to Freud's understanding of the symptom, Tylor's idea of 'survivals' offered a threshold to the past that explained cultural change as transformation. For Tylor, the purpose of evolutionary anthropology was to decipher these signs,⁴⁸ just as the purpose of psychoanalysis was to unpack the meaning of the symptom.

Furthermore, in Tylor's thought, human flesh eating was associated with the acquisition of someone's qualities, and it was a practice of both so-called primitive cultures as well as of the lower classes which were also situated in his evolutionary scale. Tylor believed that the European equivalent of the savages, in which 'exceptionally low civilization' was encountered, were the proletarians, beggars, and thieves.⁴⁹ He therefore provided a vivid description of how improper consumptions indicated the unsophistication and naivety proper to less evolved groups. In an anecdotal story about an English merchant in Shanghai, Tylor writes that 'at the time of the Taeping attack, [the merchant] met his Chinese servant carrying home a heart and asked him what he had got there. He said it was the heart of a rebel, and that he was going to take it home and eat it to make him brave.'⁵⁰ Similarly, in his 1865 work *Prehistoric Times*, Sir John Lubbock gives the following account of what the 'true savage' looked like: 'The true savage is neither free nor noble; he is a slave to his own wants, his own passions, imperfectly protected from the weather, he suffers from the cold by

⁴⁶ Tylor, 1:26.

⁴⁷ Tylor, 1:16.

⁴⁸ Tylor, 1:21.

⁴⁹ Tylor, 1:43.

⁵⁰ Tylor, 1:131.

night and the heat of the sun by the day [...] hunger always stares him in the face, and often drives him to the dreadful alternative of cannibalism or death.⁵¹ Like Tylor, Lubbock linked cannibalism with destitution and poor reasoning—Tylor’s servant believed that eating a rebel’s heart would equip him with bravery while Lubbock’s ‘true savage’ is plagued by his ignobility and improper passions. As Stocking pointed out, although utterly different from the Papuans of the New Caledonia, for Victorian anthropologists, the European peasantry still served, ‘as a crucial link between modern civilised and primitive savage man,’⁵² as an instance of ‘broken-down civilization.’⁵³

Amongst British anthropologists, Sir James Frazer was a controversial figure. Influenced by Tylor, Frazer produced a comparative work on religions in which he questioned the validity of Biblical views, inviting his audience not to take them at face value.⁵⁴ His 1890 iconic twelve volume work *The Golden Bough* is a thorough study of classical mythology and colonial anthropology, where he traces cultural evolution in different forms of thinking ranging from magical to religious to scientific.⁵⁵ Frazer made use of the comparative method not to affirm the progressive character of the European cultural achievements, as Tylor and Lubbock did, but in a more insightfully radical way. Frazer juxtaposed different religious worldviews to decenter the hegemonic affirmations of Christianity. Religious belief was not *necessarily* progressing towards a more advanced structure, since in believing in Jesus as of half human, half divine nature, worshippers, claims Frazer, lost their belief in their own sanctity and virtue:

The notion of a man-god or of a human being endowed with divine or supernatural powers, belongs essentially to that earlier period of religious history in which gods and men are still viewed as beings of much the same order, and before they are divided by the impassable gulf which, to later thought, opens out between them. Strange, therefore, as may seem to us the idea of a god incarnate in human form, it has nothing very startling for early man, who sees in a man-god or a god-man only a higher degree of the same supernatural powers which he arrogates in

⁵¹ Lord Avebury, *Prehistoric Times as Illustrated by Ancient Remains and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages*, 7th ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1913), 586.

⁵² Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 163.

⁵³ Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, 1:43.

⁵⁴ Lienhardt Godfrey, “Frazer’s Anthropology: Science and Sensibility,” *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 24, no. 1 (1993): 1–12.

⁵⁵ James George Frazer, *Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*, vol. I, II vols. (London: MacMillan and Co., 1894).

perfect good faith to himself.⁵⁶

In Frazer's view, Christian religion was a historical transformation from other forms of religious organisation and magical belief. This is why in the third edition of the *Golden Bough* his critique of Christianity was forced into the appendix (the version Freud used for *Totem and Taboo*). Furthermore, in his four-volume work *Totemism and Exogamy*, Frazer developed his theory of religion, by assembling what Wundt called as 'the richest collection of facts concerning totemic culture.'⁵⁷ Frazer believed that totemism was both a religion and a form of social organisation that regulated the relations among the individual themselves and the group: the totem was a sacred object that defined 'the relations of mutual respect and protection between a man and his totem.'⁵⁸ Moreover, 'in its social aspect it consists of the relations of the clansmen to each other and to men of other clans.'⁵⁹ Belonging in the same totem meant that individuals who shared 'one blood' were 'descendants of a common ancestor,' and were also 'bound by a common faith in the totem.'⁶⁰ By grouping individuals and linking them in the same ancestral lineage, the role of totemism among so-called primitive cultures was, according to Frazer, to fundamentally prevent incest. Unlike Jung, Frazer maintained the view—which Freud enthusiastically adopted—that the 'innovation' of totemism was not introduced 'from any such moral antipathy to incest.'⁶¹ On the contrary, 'that antipathy is rather the fruit than the seed of the prohibition.'⁶² As the allegedly less evolved cultures exemplified, totemism provided the concrete evidence for the social exigency to regulate the individual's incestuous desires.

The Scottish anthropologist and Biblical scholar Robertson Smith provided the most crucial account for Freud's narrative of the origins of society in the primal crime. Smith's 1889 study *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* uses the concepts of the totemic meal and totemic sacrifice to examine the evolution of

⁵⁶ Frazer, I:32.

⁵⁷ Wundt, *Elements of Folk Psychology*, 189–90.

⁵⁸ James George Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy: A Treatise on Certain Early Forms of Superstition and Society*, vol. 1 (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1910), 8.

⁵⁹ Frazer, 1:8.

⁶⁰ Frazer, 1:4.

⁶¹ Frazer, 1:164.

⁶² Frazer, 1:164.

religions.⁶³ Smith studied the Bible and the religions of Eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamia seeking for an evolutionary account of totemism. He believed that it was not individual faith that bounded religious groups, but a communal participation to the ritual of totemic sacrifice. Providing evidence from the Hebrews, the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, Smith showed that ancient cultures practiced human sacrifice, which, however, gradually eclipsed and was substituted with animal flesh, and in Christianity with a symbolic flesh—which was a concrete proof of cultural advancement.⁶⁴ According to Smith, the sacrificial meal was a social act of eating and drinking during which the prohibited totemic animal was collectively consumed by a particular group and established a sense of duty among them: ‘[T]hose who eat and drink together are by this very act tied to one another by a bond of friendship and mutual obligation.’⁶⁵ While with the domestication of animals, totemic sacrifices gradually ceased, Smith argues that ‘where the sacrificial meal was retained, the tendency was to drop such features in the ritual as suggested the disgusting idea of cannibalism.’⁶⁶

Furthermore, in choosing to study the Semitic cultures, namely the civilisations of Eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamia, Smith accepted the popular racial distinction of the 19th century between the Aryan and the Semite.⁶⁷ Smith constructed a historical and evolutionary scale of religions, which was overlapped by a racial subtext, imputing that evolution meant a gradual progress to Christianity, so-called Aryanism and whiteness. As a historically younger religion, and allegedly more evolved one, the ritual of the Christian communion could only be explained in the light of the older Semitic traditions. So, Smith offered historical and anthropological depth to the meaning of the Christian totemic meal, and in this sense, as did Frazer, he challenged the hegemony of Christianity as the source and origin of Western culture. In a way, Smith implied that the communion is an allegedly more evolved transformation of a much older ritual shared by Semitic peoples.

Overall, in *Totem and Taboo* Freud drew widely from the comparative

⁶³ William Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions*, 3rd ed. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1927).

⁶⁴ Smith, 355.

⁶⁵ Smith, 265.

⁶⁶ Smith, 367.

⁶⁷ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 166–67.

method, the anthropological accounts, and the evolutionary narratives of Aboriginal structures as traced in the works of then eminent and liberal British anthropologists such as Tylor and Lubbock. As Celia Brickman has insightfully argued, the theoretical pillar of *Totem and Taboo* is the British evolutionary theory, and it was used by Freud to correlate ‘civilization, the culmination of the cultural evolutionary scale of the anthropologists with psychosexual maturity,’ while the figure of the savage served as the exemplar of a less-evolved social and psychological moment.⁶⁸ Moreover, while the cannibal trope was featured as a marginal element in savage practices, in British anthropologists’ accounts it served as a designation of uncivility and destitution, and therefore it becomes an indicator of a social practice that helped forge the idea of European civility. On the contrary, it is in Smith’s discussion of the sacrificial meal that the cannibal trope becomes incorporated in the evolutionary history of religions, as the predecessor of the Christian Eucharist. Freud’s turn to Frazer and Smith was not just because these sources were available to him, as Edwin Wallace has claimed in his study of Freud’s deployment of anthropology.⁶⁹ But rather, Freud’s use of literature was both strategic and political. Prior to the publication of the final essay ‘The Return of Totemism in Childhood,’ he wrote to Abraham that his work would ‘serve to neatly eliminate anything Aryan-religious. Because that will be the consequence.’⁷⁰ Freud took his cues from two Christian British scholars who had both decentered Christianity by taking it as a cultural text and studied it comparatively. Accepting the evolutionary framework that culminated in a white Christian subjectivity, Freud incorporated a lineage among cannibalism, totemism, and the Christian communion. This way, he could argue that the minds of European Christians and Australian Aboriginal so-called savages were from a psychological point of view formed by the same unconscious wishes; and, cannibalism was one of them. However, in arguing so Freud brought within psychoanalysis a discourse of race and racial difference which defined unconscious processes.

⁶⁸ Celia Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 71.

⁶⁹ Edwin Wallace, *Freud and Anthropology: A History and Reappraisal* (New York: International Universities Press, 1983).

⁷⁰ Sigmund Freud, “Letter from Sigmund Freud to Karl Abraham May 13, 1913,” 1913. *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham 1907-1925*, 183-184. See also: Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, 239; Makari, *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis*, 284.

3.3 Totem and Taboo

Freud's *Totem and Taboo* was developed in the shadows of his conflict with Jung as an anti-Semitic intervention to psychoanalytic history. It was the racial antagonism and its implications for psychoanalytic theorisation that Freud came to reject, but in doing so, he absorbed the racial imagery of the cannibal trope embedded in Victorian anthropology. In *The Return of Totemism in Childhood* Freud applied this imagery in the manufactured narrative of the primal crime. Modern society and individuals, Freud believed, came to being from a 'primal horde' that was ruled by an authoritarian and powerful father who possessed all the women:⁷¹

'One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. [...] Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him. The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of the brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. [...]'⁷²

While the sons committed the murder to defeat the father, their love for him was expressed through the act of eating his dead body. The cannibal meal signified the brothers' union through partaking in the father's flesh and their individual acquisition of the paternal power through the possession of the women. However, the displacement and identification with the father invoked great feelings of guilt because in destroying him they had also destroyed a loved and admired figure. 'The dead father became stronger than the living one had been,'⁷³ and remorse led the sons to perpetuate his regime by renouncing the women he possessed and refraining from substituting him. The primal crime, therefore, led to the establishment of the two prohibitions of totemism which represent 'the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex'⁷⁴: the taboo on incest and on cannibalism.

For Freud, then, religion was just a transformation of totemism that helped manage the psychological conflict caused by ambivalence towards the father:

⁷¹ Freud, XIII:142.

⁷² Freud, XIII:142.

⁷³ Freud, XIII:143.

⁷⁴ Freud, XIII:144.

‘[A]t bottom God is nothing other than an exalted father.’⁷⁵ Freud then proceeds to examine the development of the Christian religion, as a unique social phenomenon that presents a shift from the father religion to ‘the son-deity who was destined to lasting success.’⁷⁶ First of all, the primal crime was developed into totemic religion where the god-father was symbolised by absence: the withdrawal from sexual impulses, the observance of prohibitions, and the carrying of guilt. This had established an ‘original democratic equality that had prevailed among all the individual clansmen.’⁷⁷ However, as the initial bitterness towards the dead father ceased, the fraternal clan sought the recovery of an ideal figure that embodied the ‘unlimited power of the primal father.’⁷⁸ Following Frazer and Smith, Freud argued that the histories of annual sacrifices among the Latin and Semitic tribes prove the indestructibility of the guilt from the primal crime. Moreover, the ritual sacrifices did not express sympathy for the sacrificed god’s passions but served the absolution of responsibility for the god’s death. Therefore, in the anthropology of religion Freud had found evidence for the sons’ rebelliousness against the father and the simultaneous feelings of guilt accompanying these impulses, which confirmed his psychological hypothesis about the fundamental ambivalence of the human subject.

In Freud’s historical, evolutionary account from the primal crime, to totemism, and to organised religion, the genesis of Christianity stands as a moment of rupture. The ground-breaking novelty of the Christian sacrifice was that it offered an ‘alternative method of allaying [...] guilt.’⁷⁹ Instead of the sacrifice being committed by the clan as a whole, Christ ‘sacrificed his own life and so redeemed the company of brothers from original sin.’⁸⁰ Freud observes that while Jesus was sacrificed to offer atonement to the god father and alleviate the worshippers’ guilt, at the same time, he achieved the replacement of the father; ‘[h]e himself became God, beside, or, more correctly, in place of, the father.’⁸¹ As a result, Christianity achieved two things: firstly, it replaced the memory of the primal crime with Jesus’ sacrifice. In a sense, ‘it is a fresh elimination of

⁷⁵ Freud, XIII:147.

⁷⁶ Freud, XIII:153.

⁷⁷ Freud, XIII:149.

⁷⁸ Freud, XIII:149.

⁷⁹ Freud, XIII:153.

⁸⁰ Freud, XIII:153.

⁸¹ Freud, XIII:154.

the father.⁸² And secondly, it reinstated the ancient totemic meal in the form of communion, in which it is the flesh of the son that is incorporated.

Having followed some of the main arguments Freud made in the final essay of *Totem and Taboo*, let us now consider what is new in the idea of cannibalism introduced here. Firstly, Freud associates the origins of civilisation and religion with the withdrawal from cannibalism. Contrary to the colonial dichotomy that considered the colonised other as a cannibal, Freud theorised the desire to overthrow and acquire the powers of the father as part of the psychic make-up of the psychoanalytic subject. Moreover, psychoanalytic subjectivity is theorised as plagued by guilt and unconscious cannibalistic wishes that constantly undermine civilisation; Jacqueline Rose even suggested that ‘the myth of primal murder [...] is modern man’s legacy to bear the repressed history of a more primitive world.’⁸³ In other words, Freud borrowed the cannibal trope from narratives that attach it to the Aboriginal to describe the cruelty and violence of the modern, civilised, white subject. In Freud’s myth of the primal horde, cannibalism is both a marker of savagery, and, the threshold to civilisation and to subjectivity. Secondly, through the myth of the origins of the social, it appears that Freud’s theory of identification makes use of the cannibal trope as the model of how an individual constructs their own identity and therefore preserves within it an ambiguous legacy of racist, colonial thought.

3.4 Consuming the Past: Aggression

In the 1920s psychoanalysis entertained world-wide celebration, a growing number of admirers, the first training institute in Berlin and its association with cultural revolution and modernism (Parisian artists were very fond of psychoanalysis).⁸⁴ Ideas such as primitivism and cannibalism had a strong presence in the avant-garde movements in Europe and Latin America. As we will see in Chapter Six more extensively, in 1922 during the Week of Modern Art in São Paulo, the Brazilian artist Oswald de Andrade launched a short-lived movement embracing anthropophagy as part of a conceptual, anti-colonialist resistance. In that historical conjuncture, the cannibal trope in Freud’s work carries the memory of anti-Semitism, the challenges of fathering the psychoanalytic movement,

⁸² Freud, XIII:155.

⁸³ Rose, “Freud in the ‘Tropics,’” 58.

⁸⁴ Makari, *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis*, 369–70.

and enters in dialogue with anti-colonial aesthetic initiatives. Embedded in the unconscious of the Western subject the cannibal trope marks a post-colonial turn, since it claims an innate savagery that contradicts the subject's rationality. On the other hand, this split is theorised through a racial trope and inserts a colonial dynamic within the subject. In this section, I explore how the collectively inherited memory of the primal cannibalism informs Freud's metapsychological theory.

One of the most profound moves to establish the continuity of the inherited memory of cannibalism and the individual unconscious is encountered in the 1915 revision of the *Three Essays of Sexuality*.⁸⁵ In the revised edition, Freud added a section expanding on the previously outlined development of sexual organisation—according to which the mouth, the anus, and the genitals functioned as erotogenic zones before pubertal sexuality. After 1915, the mouth became an orifice through which sexual energy was regulated, and the first body part that was equipped with ambivalence:

These phases of sexual organization are normally passed through smoothly, without giving more than a hint of their existence. [...] The first of these is the *oral* or, as it might be called, *cannibalistic* pregenital sexual organization. Here sexual activity has not yet been separated from the ingestion of food; nor are opposite currents within the activity differentiated. The object of both activities is the same; the sexual aim consists in the incorporation of the object—the prototype of a process which, in the form of identification, is later to play such an important psychological part.⁸⁶

Freud believed that in early life the pleasure from nutrition is undifferentiated from sexual pleasure; they both serve the same aim: the incorporation of an object. At this stage of development, sexuality aims at having, possessing and incorporating, because it is informed by a 'relic of cannibalistic desires.'⁸⁷ Freud's adherence to the evolutionist doctrine of stages is apparent in the symmetrical relationship of individual development and the evolutionary one, as outlined in *Totem and Taboo*, namely that the cannibal trope appears in the pregenital stage of the individual exposing a mutual imbrication of the individual and humanity's past in a racial dynamic, allowing the space for its overcoming via the

⁸⁵ Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.

⁸⁶ Freud, 7:116. Emphasis in the original.

⁸⁷ Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.

establishment of the oedipal prohibition.⁸⁸ However, there is also an important implication from arguing that the oral-phase of development is informed by cannibalistic desires. This pre-oedipal aggression is an inherited memory of a past long forgotten, but not entirely. As Freud had written earlier in his famous Dora paper ‘no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore.’⁸⁹ The wish to cannibalise, then, cannot be kept a secret; it oozes out in every enactment of identification and is confirmed in the process by which one acquires an individual sense of self.

Having reconstructed a historical event of a collective, fraternal cannibalistic sacrifice drawing on a hegemonic Western imaginary, and by analogy having inserted a similar cannibalistic tendency to infants, Freud made a third step towards the direction of his greatest interest during the First World War: the dissection of the contents and structure of the unconscious. This third step comes to the fore in *Mourning and Melancholia* where Freud regards the primary cannibalistic wishes as an explanation for depression. Melancholia, for Freud is conceived as an impossible mourning. Contrary to the sons who in eating a piece of their murdered father assimilated the paternal power into themselves and gave birth to laws, prohibitions, cultures, and religions, in refusing to acknowledge the loss of the loved one or in being incapable of consciously processing it,⁹⁰ the melancholic consumes herself: ‘The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable’;⁹¹ this ‘internal work [...] is consuming his ego.’⁹² To explain why the melancholic resorts to an internal, introverted aggression against herself Freud claims that the libidinal energy attached to the object is not foregone once the object is lost. If it cannot be channelled externally, it is turned inwards and thus ‘the shadow of the object falls upon the ego.’⁹³ This in turns results in an internal, unconscious split or in a distinct agency which attacks the melancholic’s ego—formulating the basis for the concept of the super-ego.

⁸⁸ Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind*.

⁸⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Fragments of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, vol. VII (1901-1905), The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works, 1905, 78.

⁹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, ed. Angela Richards, trans. Strachey, James, 2nd ed., On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 254.

⁹¹ Freud, 254.

⁹² Freud, 255.

⁹³ Freud, 258.

Remarkably, Freud regarded melancholia as a regression to an early identification with the object, a state during which any relation to the external world is impossible. Confined by an inexhaustible sorrow without any apparent explanation ('one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost')⁹⁴ tormented by an immense amount of hostility, hatred and guilt, Freud portrays the melancholic as in a profoundly a-social state, which is inevitably counter-balanced by a manic state in which the 'ravenously hungry man' is searching 'for new object-cathexes.'⁹⁵ Echoing the 19th century popular distinction that separated the West from the rest by monopolising the privilege of life under a robust, aggregable, civilised culture, contrasted with those uncivilised hordes who voraciously cannibalise each other, Freud places the melancholic as a psychologically debilitated individual, a cannibal vegetating among the civilised. Nonetheless, in *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud was perplexed by psychic states that firmly adhered to uncomfortable truths, as the melancholic has 'a keener eye for the truth than other people who are not melancholic.'⁹⁶

In a way, it appears that Freud was also trying to make sense of his own insistence on perpetuating uncomfortable truths about the human past, memory, and the nature of drives, and his almost manic devotion to the understanding of the unconscious—Freud wrote twelve (only five were completed) of his metapsychological papers in a 'seven-week span of furious activity.'⁹⁷ He had abandoned anthropological accounts of collective sacrifices to engage with the individual and her battles. In *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud adumbrated the way psychic life reflects the social one: if the melancholic is glued in a psychic debilitation, this is because her psyche is at war with itself. But this assumption would only leave a series of questions unanswered: what are these 'countless separate struggles' that the melancholic is so preoccupied with and becomes withdrawn from the social?⁹⁸ How is this separate agency with attacks the melancholic developed? Is it inherited, or is it unconsciously internalised? How much further back in the individual and collective history must one look for answers? These questions were addressed several years later. But, as often occurs in psychoanalysis, they uncannily coincided with the year Freud was diagnosed with a severe disease that would plague him until the end of his days: oral cancer.

⁹⁴ Freud, 254.

⁹⁵ Freud, 264.

⁹⁶ Freud, 255.

⁹⁷ Makari, *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis*, 303.

⁹⁸ Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, 266.

3.5 Truths Difficult to Swallow: Identification

While Freud scrutinised the untrodden paths of the human unconscious, he did not ignore the impact of the social world in shaping human psychology. A theme that emerges throughout his work is the poisonous, unnatural and unavoidable incorporations which, coming from the outside, alter one's inside. In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* Freud returned to the cannibal trope to explain group cohesion as established through a collective incorporation of a group's leader.⁹⁹ Though he had compared the unconscious contents historically and cross-culturally in *Totem and Taboo* arguing that it is the same wish that is universally repressed, in *Group Psychology* he scrutinised the 'collective mind' as shaped not only from internal, Oedipal desires, but also from an external 'common substance' that is collectively consumed among the members.¹⁰⁰ This time, Freud returned to the primal horde vignette, negated its status as historical truth and framed it as a 'just-so-story,' a not-necessarily actual event, but nonetheless a helpful paradigm to think about institutions, where individuals come together around a leading figure.¹⁰¹ Aware of the resemblances between the function of Christian communion and the collective cannibalisation of the prehistoric, Oedipal father, Freud theorised the psychological mechanism binding the group as a process of synchronous identifications with the leader. Echoing the incorporation of paternal flesh, these incorporations result in identification instead of an object-relation; 'one would like to *be*' like the leader instead of *have* him as one.¹⁰² Since the years of his close collaboration with Jung, Freud was attentive to the subtle aggression embedded in these processes and although he regarded identification as vital for the ego's development, as a process, Freud opined it is *fundamentally* ambivalent and thus, loving, but also dangerous: '[I]t can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal.'¹⁰³

The interpretation of group cohesion as dependent on the fostering of one's idealised self through an identification with an idealised leader is crucial,

⁹⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James, vol. XVIII (New York and London, 1921).

¹⁰⁰ Freud, XVIII:110.

¹⁰¹ Freud, XVIII:123.

¹⁰² Freud, XVIII:105.

¹⁰³ Freud, XVIII:105.

especially if we consider the totalitarian politics that followed a decade later.¹⁰⁴ Identification as an expression of both adoration and extermination has also been influential in post-colonial variations working on the same theme. For example, acknowledging identification as ambivalent, Homi Bhabha argued that one can bypass the problem of impossible colonial identifications (because of the irreducible difference inscribed on skin colour) outlining this way that if performed as subversive mimicry, identification with the coloniser radically challenges his authority.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, what also arises from Freud's *Group Psychology* as pertinent to this thesis is that the limit of identification is cannibalism. Or rather, to put it better, the figure of the cannibal is the best exemplification of the inherent ambivalence of identification: 'The cannibal, as we know, has a devouring affection for his enemies and only devours people of whom he is fond.'¹⁰⁶ In 1921, while writing *Group Psychology* Freud had in his mind two particular kinds of group—the Catholic Church and the army. Drawing on the cannibal trope to flesh out the mechanism of identification that unites members of these communities together, Freud exposed the inherent savagery in groups that were considered the pillars of civilization and ethics (church), and the emerging nation state (army), breaking down the Western impression that so-called primitivity and barbarity were monopolised in the colonies:

In order to make a correct judgment upon the morals of groups, one must take into consideration the fact that when individuals come together in a group all their individual inhibitions fall away and all the cruel, brutal and destructive instincts, which lie dormant in individuals as relics of a primitive epoch, are stirred up to find free gratification.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, Freud seemed to suggest that institutional authoritarianism is swallowed up, just like the worshippers swallow Jesus' flesh, and distorts the self-image from within; group members *are* like their idealised leader. What restrains this leader from being devoured then is what prohibits the re-enactment of the primal crime; the symbolic ritual of the Holy Communion or the projection of one's ambivalence towards their leader to the enemy. This is why, Freud opined, the cannibal has a devouring affection for his enemies: because in devouring

¹⁰⁴ Theodor Adorno, "Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda," in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. Jay Bernstein (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

¹⁰⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *The MIT Press*, October, 28, no. Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis (Spring 1984): 125–33.

¹⁰⁶ Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, XVIII:105.

¹⁰⁷ Freud, XVIII:15.

the enemy he is in fact devouring a projected part of the self, of which he is (narcissistically) fond. As Diana Fuss put it: 'at the basis of every identification lies a murderous wish: the subject's desire to cannibalize the other who inhabits the place it longs to occupy.'¹⁰⁸

As mentioned earlier, in October 1923 Freud was diagnosed with oral cancer; a severe condition which would gradually restrain his ability to speak.¹⁰⁹ As a manic smoker Freud was painfully aware of the poisonous consequences of some forms of internalisations (inhalations). While in *Group Psychology* he discussed identification as a form of developing an idealised sense of self (ego ideal), two years later, in *The Ego and the Id* introducing the structural model of the mind, Freud proposed the existence of an agency that arises from an external source and holds the inhaled poisonous savagery inside.¹¹⁰ The role of the super-ego was set to oversee the ego wishes by imposing a moral framework mapped on individual identity: 'You ought to be like this' but 'you *may not be* like your father.'¹¹¹ The development of a super-ego is fundamental for the individual's participation in the social world—which is why cultural institutions such as the school and the church reinforce the overseeing character of the super-ego—¹¹²but most importantly, it is also a sign of a civilised status. For Freud, it is only the so-called 'savages' or Aboriginal tribes that depend on the external authority of the totem.¹¹³ The introjection of paternal authority is believed to promote individuation and independence, and, to shift the source of fear as well; civilised men fear their super-ego and their conscience, whereas having not introjected the 'supreme power' of the father, the so-called primitive men fear external authority.¹¹⁴ Carrying forward the evolutionary evaluation of the so-called savages as having less complex unconscious structures, and therefore, requiring an external form of super-ego to impose laws and prohibitions, Freud legitimised the view that cultures deemed less evolved, needed to be ruled, exemplifying how deeply

¹⁰⁸ Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1995) 93.

¹⁰⁹ Makari, *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis*, 350.

¹¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and The Id*, ed. Angela Richards, trans. Strachey, James, 2nd ed., *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

¹¹¹ Freud, 374. Emphasis in the original.

¹¹² Freud, 374.

¹¹³ Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*.

¹¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents (1930)*, trans. David McLintonck (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 63.

racism is embedded in psychoanalysis.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, in his late writings Freud also emphasised that it is precisely the severe judgments of the super-ego that cause the suffering of the Western mind, making the task of psychoanalysis the alleviation of the moral indictments of this tyrannical consciousness.¹¹⁶ This begs the question, where does the super-ego acquire its severity from?

In *The Ego and the Id* Freud concludes that the role of the super-ego is not important only for the individual, but for the 'species' too.¹¹⁷ It is not merely parental authority that is introjected in the emergence of the super-ego, but a history of relations to authority that can be traced back to the genesis of religion, morality and culture, since 'the super-ego [...] actually originated from the experiences that led to totemism.'¹¹⁸ In Freud's thinking, the primary experience of authority in humanity's prehistory has left its mark as an unconscious memory inherited from one generation to another and 'born afresh with every child.'¹¹⁹ As a social agency, the super-ego carries the traces of a violent past act.

I have tried to show that Freud's engagement with the colonial fantasy of cannibalism was inspired by Jung's challenges to psychoanalytic theory, and it can be read through the perspective of a racial antagonism between the two men. However, this is not to argue that Freud engaged with the cannibal trope only as a response to Jung's anti-Semitism. The cannibal trope became embroiled in Freud's metapsychology and brought with it the legacy of a 'phylogenetic' trauma, a collective memory of violence related to questions of race. More importantly, Freud proposed the proximity between cannibalism and Christianity as a way of working out the psychic mechanism of particular groups, like the flock of Christian followers who, just like in authoritarian regimes, are concentrated around a sanctified figure with the members feeling connected to each other through collective consumption. In Christianity, consumption acquires the symbolic form of the Communion, but when it comes to authoritarianism consumption becomes a synonym for the identification of one's ego-ideal, one's idealised sense of self with the leader. Furthermore, both

¹¹⁵ Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, "The Primitive as Analyst: Postcolonial Feminism's Access to Psychoanalysis," *Cultural Critique*, University of Minnesota Press, 28 (1994): 193.

¹¹⁶ Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930).

¹¹⁷ It represents the most important characteristics of the development both of the individual and of the species Freud, *The Ego and The Id*, 375.

¹¹⁸ Freud, 378.

¹¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. James Strachey (New York & London: W.W.Norton, 1961), 10.

the church and the army are groups that do not tolerate ambivalence towards the leader—which has nothing to do with personal dislike but is premised on the inherent ambivalence towards the paternal figure. Such ambivalence is, instead, projected outwards. This argument constitutes the basis of Freud's explanation of anti-Semitism through the figure of the cannibal: Cannibals/Christians foster a devouring sympathy towards their enemies and only devour those they are fond of; what is implied therefore is that at the basis of the Judeo-Christian antagonism and its expression through anti-Semitism, there is envy.

3.6 The Return of the Repressed: The Cannibal Trope in *Moses and Monotheism*

'What is all too often missed by his readers,' Yosef Yerushalmi wrote about Freud, 'is the dialectic that [he] establishes between Judaism and Christianity, and the difference in his view of Judaism as a religion and the Jews as a people.'¹²⁰ As previously shown, Freud incorporated the cannibal trope, and the colonial imagery accompanying it, in the visualisation of identification as a violent, yet loving incorporation of an external figure, crucial for individual development. In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud returned to themes he had previously dimly explored regarding the relation between race, religion, identity, and their individual and collective origins in the primal crime. In the book, Freud rewrote the history of Judaic origins by revisiting the history of Moses, but in doing so, he made an important intervention in the role and history of Christianity as well. In *Moses*' second preface it becomes clear that Freud develops previously rehearsed arguments: 'Not that I should have anything to say that would be new or that I did not say clearly a quarter of century ago,' in *Totem and Taboo*, but 'it has been forgotten in the meantime and it could not be without effect if I repeated it to-day.'¹²¹ *Moses*, therefore, is a text about the remembrance and return of the forgotten histories of origins that had been pushed away in the psychoanalytic unconscious. It has also itself been a text of remembrance and revival of silenced arguments within the psychoanalytic history since the times of *Totem and Taboo*. In this final section, I focus on how Freud elaborates on the histories of the two religions in relation to a fundamental difference among them: Christianity's revival of the totemic meal. Overall, in *Moses* we encounter two important

¹²⁰ Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 50.

¹²¹ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1939), 296.

points: firstly, that through the cannibal trope Freud demonstrates Christianity as a practice of an earlier evolutionary stage, and secondly, that to combat anti-Semitism Freud widely relies on the colonial fantasy of a prehistoric time where ambivalence is expressed through the abolition of physical boundaries, as exemplified by cannibalism.

In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud explores the historical possibility that Moses, the founder of Judaism, was an Egyptian prince. ‘To deprive a people of the man whom they take pride in as the greatest of their sons is not a thing to be gladly or carelessly undertaken, least of all by someone who is himself one of them.’¹²² Divesting Moses from his Hebraic origins has, of course, significant implications not only in Freud’s understanding of Judaism, but in his thinking about identity, race and religion. ‘A blow [...] to a certain kind of Jewish narcissism,’ Yerushalmi argues, which misplaces and displaces the notion of the origin. What is more, it also, by extension, invites the reader to draw a similar conclusion about Jesus and Paul: the two most important figures in the Christian tradition were not Christian, but Jewish. This is the kind of implicit rationale found in *Moses and Monotheism* that draws on and extends the argument originally presented in *Totem and Taboo* about how civilisation was founded by cannibalistic, savage sons; there is no identity that is not founded in and through difference. As Edward Said puts it: ‘[I]dentity cannot be thought or worked through itself alone; it cannot constitute or even imagine itself without that radical originary break or flaw which will not be repressed because Moses was Egyptian, and therefore always outside the identity inside which so many have stood, and suffered—and later, perhaps even triumphed.’¹²³ Freud’s *Moses* marked a contemplation on how religious groups manage the fundamental openness of identity by exploring how they engage with their historical origins.

Having established a theoretical framework of how neurosis marks a return of repressed memories through which the path to the traumatic event can be pursued, Freud argued that Judaism and Christianity must be understood as repetitions of the archaic memory of the primal crime. In teaching about God’s omnipotence, Moses revived the memory of the primal father and eventually shared his fate by being slaughtered. The memory of Moses’ murder became repressed, and so did the ambivalence towards him; instead, in Judaism

¹²² Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 13:243.

¹²³ Edward Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (London: Verso, 2003), 54.

ambivalence manifested itself in the illusion of ‘being a chosen people,’¹²⁴ and in a ‘bad conscience for having sinned against God and for not ceasing to sin.’¹²⁵ However, Freud argued that it was the emergence of the Christian doctrine that fully recovered the memory of the primal crime. A Jewish man, Saul of Tarsus (later known as Paul) ‘seized upon this sense of guilt and traced it back correctly to its original source.’¹²⁶ What Paul had understood was that unhappiness and remorse were indicators of a crime committed; Freud exposes the unconscious content of Paul’s teachings: “[T]he reason we are so unhappy is that we have killed God the father.” And it is entirely understandable that he could only grasp this piece of truth in the delusional disguise of the glad tidings.¹²⁷ Freud explained the Christian religion as instituting a sacrificial ritual that offered relief from guilt—the celebration of Jesus’ sacrifice that replaced the ‘blissful sense of being chosen by the liberating sense of redemption.’¹²⁸ As argued in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud claimed that Christianity grew out of a father-religion, like Judaism, but substituted the father with the son who in taking ‘the atonement on himself, became a god himself beside the father and, actually, in place of the father.’¹²⁹

Furthermore, as a son-religion Christianity was fashioned as more progressive; moving from monotheism to polytheism, worshipping more divine figures, and bringing the adoration of women at the centre of religion.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, Freud argues that in fact, these aspects of the new religion ‘meant a cultural regression,’¹³¹ because—and here is the juicy part—the historical truths carried forward by religion, and Christianity in particular revived ‘large portions of the past’ ‘in excellent replicas.’¹³² Freud believed that if Jesus’ sacrifice was the necessary step for the absolution of guilt, then the crime from which the guilt emanates must have been a murder. Following this logic, it appears that the only crime that can be atoned by collective consumption of flesh and blood must have been an act of cannibalism. ‘Thus,’ Freud writes, ‘authorities have often been struck by the faithful way in which the sense and content of the old totem meal is repeated in the rite of the Christian Communion, in which the believer

¹²⁴ Freud, 13:329.

¹²⁵ Freud, 13:383.

¹²⁶ Freud, 13:330.

¹²⁷ Freud, 13:384.

¹²⁸ Freud, 13:385.

¹²⁹ Freud, 13:385.

¹³⁰ Freud, 13:332.

¹³¹ Freud, 13:332.

¹³² Freud, 13:328.

incorporates the blood and flesh of his god in symbolic form.¹³³

Overall, Freud seemed to be arguing that contrary to Judaism where the murder of the primal father had become forgotten, Christianity was founded upon the acknowledgment of this murder, the acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice as an atonement for the crime and last but not the least, the displacement of the crime's responsibility onto the Jews. With the birth of Christianity came the birth of anti-Semitism. The Christians hate the Jews because they represent a father-religion, whereas as a son-religion, Christianity is confined in the psychological position of a son constantly managing his ambivalence for his father. The psychology of anti-Semitism could be explained by a universal, for Freud truth, which he had widely confirmed through his clinical experience: '[A]s contributions to our understanding of the son's relation to the father which is of such great importance, I need only bring forward animal phobias, the fear which strikes us as so strange, of being eaten by the father [...].'¹³⁴

The conclusion that can be drawn from Freud's text thus is that both religions respond to a similar traumatic archaic event. However, Jews have transformed their ambivalence for the father into a form of constitutional guilt. Contrarily, Christianity has managed ambivalence by enacting it either in the form of a symbolic consumption of the figure of origin, Jesus' flesh and blood, eating away otherness within their community, or by displacing their hatred for the father onto the 'father-religion' in the form of anti-Semitic hatred.¹³⁵ Freud effectively reversed the anti-Semitic dichotomy between spirituality and carnality and produced a convincing account of how anti-Semitic hatred was not a matter of politics, but a deeply felt conflict about the engagement with otherness—Judaism will always symbolize Christianity's origins in Judaism. 'Anti-Semitism is not incidental but endemic to Christianity, doubly so because of its unconscious component.'¹³⁶ Freud exposed that the unconscious wish of anti-Semitism was consumption, murderous annihilation; the historical origins of Christianity meant that Jewishness had to be exterminated, just as the colonial enterprise had devoured, swept out Aboriginal cultures, which as colonial anthropology later argued resembled the past of Western civilisation.

¹³³ Freud, 13:328.

¹³⁴ Freud, 13:328.

¹³⁵ Stephen Frosh, *Hate and the Jewish Science*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

¹³⁶ Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 52.

Nevertheless, in order to manage anti-Semitism Freud depended on a mythological excess that symbolised racial difference and savagery through the fantasy of eating away boundaries. The colonial imagery of cannibalism assisted Freud's conceptualisation of the Eucharist as a regression to the era of totemism, exemplifying that Christian community bonds are basically structured on a shared carnality and essence—contrary to the Jewish spirituality that is shaped on partaking in guilt. As previously shown, Freud framed individual psychological development as a move away from devouring tendencies, blurred boundaries, improper appetites, unacknowledged ambivalence. While individual development is engraved on a trajectory away from the colonial imaginings of cannibalism, the history of religious evolution presents an opposite temporal movement; Christianity, says Freud is in fact a regression to an earlier evolutionary stage. Although it is possible to argue that Freud marks psychoanalytic subjectivity as moving towards whiteness, he also creates a tension towards such advancement; the 1930s Christian subject, taking pride in its Aryanism, psychologically is regressed to an earlier stage of darkness. This is a crucial contribution towards post-colonialism, and it is one often silenced because Freud's references are rarely studied within their historical context. Considering the wider climate of anti-Semitism, Freud's deployment of the cannibal trope as part of the instinctual make-up, leaves racialised subjectivities fundamentally open. But at the same time, without acknowledging the racist, colonialist discourses that underpin such arguments, psychoanalysis is doomed to reiterate the same forms of racial violence, prejudice and subjection that it sought to avoid.

In this chapter, I have argued that although not subject to the same level of scrutiny as the taboo on incest, the cannibal trope can in fact be shown to reveal the close proximity between an archaic act of cannibalism common to all human cultures, and the Christian rituals of communion. Freud's link between Christianity and cannibalism serves as a potential intervention into anti-Semitic and racist discourses that project cannibalism onto the figure of the other. But, Freud's attempt to track the omnipresence of cannibalism as an archaic history within all human cultures is subject to reproducing a colonialist framework popular within European epistemology. Within this Western, colonial culture the cannibal has always appeared as the 'other' and the cannibal trope has been projected on the figure of the colonised. This displacement of the cannibal trope serves as the foundation of a colonial framework within psychoanalysis which

refuses to let go the forms of racial domination of whiteness. In the next chapter, the psychoanalytic heritage of the cannibal trope and its accompanying themes as they move away from its paternal subtexts into the mother-infant relationship, will be scrutinised according to the greatest psychoanalytic theorist of orality, consumption, fluid and devoured boundaries, Melanie Klein.

CHAPTER FOUR

Devouring Proximity: Melanie Klein and Colonial Fantasies

4.1 Introduction

In one of her earliest papers on the concept of reparation, Melanie Klein recounts the story of how a young woman named Ruth Kjär came to become a painter. Klein explains that Kjär produced her first painting when a spot on her wall was left blank after the removal of one of the paintings, she and her husband, owned. For Klein, the empty space in the wall became a symbolic reminder of Kjär's own melancholic emptiness and encouraged her to fill it by producing her first self-portrait. After the completion of the painting, her melancholy softened, and her creativity evolved into an artistic stream of paintings depicting Kjär's sister and mother. Through this biographical anecdote, Klein justifies the Kjär's creativity as a means to explore and experiment with fantasies about her own mother through art. It is telling, for Klein, that Kjär represented her mother both in an unfavourable tone, as tired out and aged, and in a realistic manner exhibiting her actual imperial and charming posture. While the former painting satisfied the painter's aggression and destructiveness towards her mother, Klein argues, with the latter she repaired the damage she had originally provoked. Overall, Klein concludes '[t]he desire to make reparation, to make good the injury psychologically done to the mother and also to restore herself was at the bottom of the compelling urge to paint these portraits of her relatives.'¹

However, the importance of Klein's analysis of the story lies not on what is worked through, but on what Klein omits from her analysis; what is brushed as merely an unimportant reference. As Klein is focusing on how the reparation of the mother is the main aim of artistic production, the content of the first portrait Kjär made to fill the 'empty space' on the wall is glossed over in a short reference. Klein writes that '[I]n seeking the explanation of these ideas, it is instructive to consider what sort of pictures Ruth Kjär has painted since her first attempt, when she filled the empty space on the wall with the life-sized figure of a naked

¹ Melanie Klein, "Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and in the Creative Impulse," in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1986), 93.

negress.²

There are a handful of potential explanations for Klein's obliviousness towards the racial difference between the painter and her self-portrait. For example, we learn from Klein that Kjär's mother was Irish and thus, it could be argued that the daughter's identification with her is made with an aspect of her mother's heritage that was considered racialised. As the feminist critic Jean Walton has argued, Klein's 'suspicious' silence on race, however, infects her account of reparation with an untheorized other: if Kjär painted the portrait of the naked, black woman as the 'prelude to a series of portraits' that repaired her internalised imagery of her mother, then Klein's theory of reparation depends on this racial silencing and becomes a theory of white feminine subjectivity.³ Walton's Klein is one who is overpowered by institutional, epistemological and ideological rigidity to the point that she subjects to the silencing of racial difference, as in Kjär's story: 'something about the specific obsessions of psychoanalysis prevented Klein, the third white woman in this mise-en-abyme of female representations, from exploring that significance in such a way that it might seriously transform the institution she was both entering and creating.'⁴ In other words, Walton implies that there seemed to be something that did not allow Klein's psychoanalysis to engage with race.

Walton's feminist perspective seems to uncover what she calls the 'unacknowledged racialized matrix' which is inevitably part of Klein's analysis of reparation.⁵ However, Walton is not the only critic to encounter in Klein an instrumental use of racial difference to establish her theory of the European subject. Adopting Klein's theory in the context of politics, David Eng makes a case for reparation as a Eurocentric concept. Eng argues that reparation implies that all subjects are repairable, whereas the history of colonialism manifests otherwise, since the catastrophic effects on the colonised people of colour are rarely recognised.⁶ Yet, while Walton and Eng have critically taken psychoanalysis as a cultural text and explored how black bodies have been swept away from psychoanalytic representation, their perspectives fail to move beyond the domain of

² Klein, 93.

³ Jean Walton, *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams: Race, Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 43.

⁴ Walton, 36.

⁵ Walton, 29.

⁶ David L. Eng, "Colonial Object Relations," *Social Text* 34, no. 1 126 (2016): 1-19, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3427105>.

representation to examine Klein's eclectic use of racial imageries. Indeed, despite my personal sympathy for Kleinian psychoanalysis, critiques such as by Walton and Eng need to be amplified towards the direction whereby racial difference becomes a fundamental theme for the construction of psychoanalytic subjectivity. As argued in the previous chapter, Freud's psychoanalytic engagement with race resulted in inscribing an implicitly evolutionary framework in development which depended on a racialised excess. My focus in this chapter is precisely on how Klein transforms, disrupts, or unwittingly perpetuates this framework. I do so by exploring the moments in which the colonial imaginings of the cannibal trope enter Klein's analysis.

Melanie Klein's case study is enticingly full of images of devouring proximity, blurred boundaries, and anxieties of being eaten. Hence, she offers a great example of how the colonial imagery of transgressing the boundaries of human flesh is written into a psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity. By looking at Klein's writing in relation to the colonial and cultural milieu alongside her theory of psychosexual development and writings on sexual difference, I argue that Klein unwittingly abides with colonial imageries despite being a renowned theorist of interiority and unconscious fantasies. The importance of Klein's work is her explicit emphasis on negativity and destructiveness within the subject which constantly undoes and threatens its coherence and integrity. However, since she frames psychosexual development as a transition from more persecutory and split psychic states without solid boundaries into more integrated and gentle ones, she does not question how this dichotomy is drawn from the colonial example in the first place. Therefore, she theorises the psychoanalytic subject as moving towards a state that is tailored in accordance with the imagery of white civility. A particular shortcoming here is that she does not account for sexual difference outside this colonial dichotomy. While Kleinian psychoanalysis has been one of the earliest attempts to write about femininity, she displaces the colonial dichotomy onto sexual difference by writing about women as more oral, cannibalistic, and melancholic—which forecloses any possibility to theorise forms of subjectivity that are both female and non-white.

4.2 Childhood and Race: An Overview

At its simplest level, Kleinian psychoanalysis is concerned with the unconscious world of early childhood. While living with her family in Budapest, Klein was

drawn to psychoanalysis as an analysand of Sandor Ferenczi who introduced her to Freud's writings and prompted her to make use of her gift for understanding children by becoming involved in infant psychoanalysis. In 1919, Klein was admitted to the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society and began her work by developing a method of approaching children psychoanalytically. Historically speaking, Klein's interest in early infancy should be read within a wider social configuration gradually taking place from the 18th century on, as pointed out by Philippe Ariès, according to whom, childhood emerged as a category along with the proliferation of the divide between public and private life, society and the family, labour and education.⁷ The concept of childhood, Ariès shows, was associated with an age that was lacking sexuality, and which required discipline alongside schooling. Accordingly, it also fostered the rise of the nuclear family which 'began to hold society at a distance, to push it back beyond a steadily extending zone of private life.'⁸ In order to understand the reason for Klein's engagement or silencing of race, and the cannibal trope in particular, I would like to first expose two themes from the historical context of her work that have affected the way she handled racial difference: the racialised dimension of childhood and British anti-Semitism along with her own experience of being racialised—while elaborating how these discourses become displaced in her theory of psychoanalysis.

In her book *Race and the Education of Desire*, Ann Stoler argues that in imperial Europe, children were regarded as the foundations of the bourgeois family, whose discipline and conditioning ensured the perpetuation of class and racial competencies, and thus, their education was premised upon the avoidance of any external 'contagion.'⁹ The major source for concern was the company of servants to whom the children were exposed, and who presented a threat because of their racial and class alterity.¹⁰ In this respect, housekeeping manuals at the turn of the 19th century invited parents to monitor their children, whose sexuality was not considered as a natural form of curiosity but as that of an external imposition by corrupt, racialised others: The children 'were encouraged and guided in [...] exercises in self-pleasure by servants, not taught to do it by

⁷ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962).

⁸ Ariès, 398.

⁹ Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (London: Duke University Press, 1995), 153.

¹⁰ Stoler, 153.

themselves.¹¹ Nonetheless, not unlike the manuals emphasising the exigency for intervention in children's sexuality, natural scientists were similarly inclined to study childhood, not necessarily only as a period of innocence, education, and discipline, but also as a part of the natural world and the evolutionary history of the human mind.

In her historical investigation of childhood and its reappraisal in British psychoanalysis, Denise Riley traces a number of themes tied to the representation of the category of childhood as formulated in the 19th century evolutionary human sciences. Riley argues that the observation of infantile behaviour, the study of Aboriginal cultures, and natural history were the 'well-ordered steps to the fuller knowledge of the "finished" mind.'¹² The finished mind here stands as the prototype against which racial, cultural, and sexual differences were measured—and, just as its gender was masculine, its race was whiteness. Riley's account of the epistemology of 19th century British psychological studies helps us identify a paradox: that although the category child held the social structure of the family together, it was simultaneously studied in isolation, detached, and disassociated from its surrounding adults, i.e. the parents. The child was seen as an independent category that was objectified and 'transposed out of its background, usually the family.'¹³ An account of this is found in Charles Darwin's paper titled *A Biographical Sketch of an Infant* where he praises babies on the grounds of their capacity to acquire language as an indication of human genius.¹⁴ Darwin's paper takes the child as an individual and studies it developmentally through a series of individual traits that are tied to communicative and mental functions such as the acquisition of language, the origins and expressions of emotions, and the mental use of experience. His work was integrated in several strands of specialist study of childhood emerging in Britain in the early 20th century which proposed theories of 'infant management' based on studies of learning processes, educational psychology, and intelligence testing.¹⁵

Most of the time, studies of childhood and children of the late 19th century were underpinned by the idea that the child was an accessible object for study, not

¹¹ Stoler, 155.

¹² Denise Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London: Virago, 1983), 47.

¹³ Riley, 42.

¹⁴ Charles Darwin, "A Biographical Sketch of an Infant," *Mind* II (1877): 285–94; see also: Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother*, 46.

¹⁵ Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother*, 59.

much different from ‘the squirrel or the daisy’ precisely because it is a part of the natural world of human development—as Riley puts it, it ‘simply’ was there.¹⁶ Echoing Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, the assumption that an object of study simply *is*, instead of ‘coming into being’ through a set of historical, and social processes, is itself emblematic of Western epistemologies.¹⁷ That is, social categories do not come to being simply by virtue of particular forms of thought; they are naturalised and are considered to represent a universal truth. In this sense, the category of the ‘child’ was instrumental in the construction of Western accounts of gender and race because it was seen as a sexless as much as a raceless period in human life, out of which, the adult white male subject emerged.¹⁸ Childhood was instrumental in the processes of imperial self-making, and by being exempt from a racial understanding children helped, in fact, delineate the boundaries of racial difference: children were regarded as pure, naïve, and hence in need of protection from fraudulent and black others. On the other hand, children seemed as not having become fully white and thus provided evidence for (white) scientific study. Caught between whiteness and blackness, between masculinity and femininity childhood was, above all, the place of intervention, discipline, education and pedagogy that would safeguard the perpetuation of racial and gendered dynamics. By contrast, while the sociological profile of children was one that did not acknowledge any agency, psychoanalysts had a different view. Freud’s explicit reference to infantile sexuality radically contradicted the nature of the norms surrounding childhood and challenged the social construction of infantile naivety and innocence. Suggesting that children were ‘polymorphously perverse,’ Freud considered libidinal impulses at work from the earliest years of life and highlighted the importance of childhood in the psychology of adults.¹⁹

But where Freudian psychoanalysis made theoretical formulations on childhood by examining adult neurotics and tracing their historical past, Klein analysed children and observed the significance of the early mother-infant experiences as the foundations for psychic life. As Jean Pontalis puts it: ‘[F]or Klein it was

¹⁶ Riley, 42.

¹⁷ Seshadri-Crooks, “The Primitive as Analyst: Postcolonial Feminism’s Access to Psychoanalysis,” 195.

¹⁸ Interestingly, there were a few psychological accounts that, according to Riley, grasped the ‘humanising’ implications of this formulation, and they only did so half-jokingly, by arguing that getting in touch with a child’s helplessness and dependency was an entirely feminine work since it had a ‘softening and mollifying effect’ on the male scientist. Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother*, 48.

¹⁹ Freud, “*The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*” (1905), 191.

a matter of coming to meet the child's psychic reality and measuring adult knowledge against it.²⁰ The point here is that while Kleinian psychoanalysis is traditionally associated with interiority and psychic reality, and while she did not produce any sociological writings like those of Freud, her psychoanalytic theory is organised through dominant discourses on racial difference. That is because of her engagement with children, that is, a category with a significant role in racial representation. Thus, a social dimension in her work must be acknowledged. For example, Klein refers to the work of her contemporary Géza Róheim and his analogy of children with the so-called primitive people who, as already argued in the white imaginary, were black because they were not conditioned in white civility. In her first paper, *The Development of a Child* (1921) Klein exposes this psychoanalytic heritage: 'Dr Abraham, in his paper [...] showed that the origin of the formation of sexual theories is to be sought for in the child's disinclination to assimilate knowledge of the part played by the parent of the other sex. Róheim pointed to the same source for the sexual theories of primitive peoples.'²¹

4.3 'She really is Cleopatra'

When Klein arrived in London, she was regarded by some, albeit secretly and privately, as a racial other, which, even though not *explicitly* informing her work, must nonetheless be taken into consideration—Klein remained mostly silent on the growing anti-Semitic harassments in continental Europe.²² Most of the accounts that present Klein as a racial other come ironically from Alix Strachey, the woman whose intervention eventually helped Klein to leave Berlin and settle permanently in London in 1926. Strachey was an analysand of Freud's, and later a psychoanalyst herself as well as a pioneer in the Bloomsbury group—a group of intellectuals who contributed to the dissemination of psychoanalysis—and, who became a close friend of Klein's.²³ Prior to Klein's first talk at the British

²⁰ Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "The Question Child," in *Reading Melanie Klein*, ed. Lyndsey Stonebridge and John Phillips, trans. Phillip Cullen and Catherine Cullen (London: Routledge, 1998), 83.

²¹ Melanie Klein, "The Development of a Child (1921)," in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945*, vol. 1 (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1975), 34.

²² Michal Shapira discusses some clinical cases that she argues, were informed by the invasion of Nazis in Austria, but she shows how Klein used this external reality to think about how it awakens the patient's internal fears and anxieties. Michal Shapira, *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²³ Phyllis Grosskurth, *Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 133.

Society in 1925, Alix confided in one of her letters to her husband James:

By the way, Melanie showed me a hat she's bought to lecture in London and knock her audience [...] It's a vastly, voluminous affair in bright yellow with a huge brim and a cluster, a whole garden, of mixed flowers... The total effect is that of an overblown tearose... She looks like a whore run mad—or, no—she really *is* Cleopatra... for through it all, there's something very handsome and attractive in her face. She's a dotty woman. But there's no doubt whatever that her mind is stored with things of thrilling interest. And she's a nice character.²⁴

The excessive contradiction in Alix's impression of Klein—the way one can be both a 'whore run mad' and a 'nice character' at the same time seems rather remarkable—might on the one hand, reflect Klein's intense character and perhaps her own internal conflicts and splitting, but on the other, one cannot fail to notice the subtle anti-Semitism and exoticisation of Klein as 'Cleopatra,' the queen of Egypt. In another letter from 1925, Alix refers to Klein's appearance and manners—through another Mediterranean figure this time—indicating a lack of elegance, refinement and class, in a way, implying a racial sense of hot-bloodedness: 'I was glad not to be with Melanie for she takes the high conventional line—a sort of ultra heterosexual Semiramis in slap-up fancy dress waiting to be pounced on, etc etc and not stooping to amateur behaviour and conversation...'²⁵

Was Klein aware of Alix's hidden views of her? In her unpublished autobiography, written one year before her death in 1959, Klein expresses, in her typically austere manner, a very balanced and contained view on her Jewish identity as a cluster of inheritance and suspicion:

Both [my father] and my mother were deeply attached to the Jewish race, and that has really remained in me to the present. It did not take the same form as they had, because, in the choice of my friends and relations, it hardly matters whether they are Gentile or Jewish, but I have kept a strong feeling for the Jewish race, though I am fully aware of their faults and shortcomings.²⁶

This emotional impartiality indicates that Jewishness, as a part of her family's

²⁴ Grosskurth, 136.

²⁵ Grosskurth, 134.

²⁶ Melanie Klein, "The Autobiography of Melanie Klein," ed. Janet Sayers and John Forrester, *Psychoanalysis and History* 15 (2013): 136–37.

history and identity, was an issue Klein would not discuss, or reflect on—at least, not in her autobiography—and more interestingly, anti-Semitism was nowhere to be found. Yosef Yerushalmi, on the other hand, explicitly refers to the ‘genteel Bloomsbury anti-Semitism of Alix Stratchey,’ indicating how subtly embroidered in comments circulated among non-Jewish British analysts it was, revealing both a sense of discomfort and the impression that language did in fact carry racialised references—as in Alix’s comments on Klein as Cleopatra and Semiramis. Yerushalmi quotes the following discussion, which took place among Ernest Jones, James Stratchey (Alix’s husband), and Joan Riviere on the issue of the translation of the German ‘das Es’—as it was transferred from James to Alix Stratchey in 1924:

They want to call ‘das Es’ ‘the Id.’ I thought everyone would say ‘the Yidd.’ So Jones said there was no such word in English: ‘There’s “Yiddish,” you know. And in German “Jude.” But there is no such word as Yidd.’ –‘Pardon me doctor, Yidd is a current words for a Jew.’—‘Ah! A slang expression. It cannot be in very widespread use then.’²⁷

On a similar note, Frosh argues that at the bottom of the aforementioned incident also lies the fact that the refusal of Jewish psychoanalysts to change their views and undo their separateness by becoming more assimilated was considered, on behalf of some British analysts, as a source of trouble.²⁸ Phyllis Grosskurth who in her thoroughly weighty tome on Klein’s biography does not include a single reference to the Bloomsbury group’s subtle anti-Semitism while giving an animated, if not always flattering for Klein, account of the Alix-Melanie pair, in which Klein’s manners and Jewishness come together as signifiers of low racial and class status: ‘[T]he two incongruous companions, one tall, angular, and Bloomsbury, the other squat, Jewish, and déclassée, must have made a curious pair.’²⁹ Klein’s unfavourable portraits—Kristeva also mentions her ‘devouring, sadistic character—’³⁰ might therefore be read as an unconscious response to Bloomsbury anti-Semitism, and the experiences of being marked as a racial other, which subsequently informed her theoretical overview (and, perhaps, silencing) on race. Overall, for the purposes of this project, this form of

²⁷ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 46.

²⁸ Frosh, *Hate and the Jewish Science: Anti-Semitism, Nazism and Psychoanalysis*, 46.

²⁹ Grosskurth, *Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work*, 133.

³⁰ Julia Kristeva, *Melanie Klein*, trans. Ross Guberman, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 29.

concealed racial discomfort—mostly taking place in private correspondence—must be taken into consideration particularly in the way Klein makes use of the cannibal trope, as another form of racialisation in the context of the infant’s unconscious fantasy, and more importantly, in her account of femininity.

4.4 Eat or Be Eaten: Splitting and the Death Drive

In the interwar period, Freud began considering the possibility of destructiveness and death as wishes of the modern subject, contradicting the quest for life of sexual forces. In his 1920 study of the human instincts, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud came across the phenomenon of recurring painful thoughts and dreams, traumatic memories and repetitive events through which individuals relived an experience that they sought to forget in the first place. Freud concluded that the tendency to repeat could be justified by an impulse that was not after pleasure yet after death: the tendency to destroy, to cut off relations, to withdraw to passivity, and to seek return to an ‘inorganic existence [...] immanent in the organism itself.’³¹ Freud argued that human instincts could be categorised into ‘those which seek to lead what is living to death, and others, the sexual instincts, which are perpetually attempting and achieving a renewal of life.’³² Indeed, Freud’s hypothesis of a life and death conflict was at the core of his bleak prognosis for the future of civilisation. ‘We are born with death in our hearts; its manifestation, directed outwards as a defence, is in aggression.’³³

One of the most tantalisingly rich and troublesome innovations of Kleinian psychoanalysis was her emphasis on the subject’s inherent negativity. Klein believed that the physiological nature of the death instinct had a psychological effect: It manifested in ‘the primary anxiety of being annihilated by a destructive force within.’³⁴ The death drive is a polyvalent force at operation in the subject that endangers the relations with the external world. It burdens the individual with psychological strain and determines its coping mechanisms. As Stephen Frosh highlights, although Klein did not completely negate the importance of

³¹ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis 11 (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 311.

³² Freud, 318.

³³ Stephen Frosh, *The Politics of Psychoanalysis*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1999), 32.

³⁴ Melanie Klein, “Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms (1946),” in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1986), 180.

the environment in ameliorating or aggravating the inner conflict caused by the death drive, she called it at least constitutional.³⁵

In speaking of an innate conflict between love and hatred, I am implying that both destructive impulses and the capacity for love are, to some extent, constitutional, varying individually in strength. They are increased by external circumstances.³⁶

While the death drive is juxtaposed by love, it should not be seen as entirely counterbalanced or compensated by it, as some Kleinian followers have argued. For example, Hanna Segal, Klein's most sympathetic advocate, has treated the death drive as an ordinary tendency towards disintegration and psychic fragmentation expressed in the form of an 'overwhelming anxiety of annihilation,' characteristic of the early years of life.³⁷ For Segal, the grim picture of early infancy that Klein offers prepares the ground for goodness, love, and integration, and therefore, tends to remove the excessiveness of early proximity with the mother. Segal's account of the death drive washes away the fundamental terror and anxiety that Klein situates within the subject whereas the intensity of hostility is only reserved for the realm of pathology.³⁸ This is not to fetishise fragmentation and death in the subject, but to argue that when Klein's death drive is seen as an ordinary anxiety which can be resolved, it is easy to lapse into normative accounts of development as progressing from psychic conflict to resolution. On the contrary, the Kleinian individual does not so much develop in a straight line from "A" to "B" [...] but is constantly defined and redefined by the vicissitudes of anxiety.³⁹

Critical psychoanalytic thinkers such as Jacqueline Rose and Lyndsey Stonebridge have emphasised Klein's negativity not as a quality of the individual but as a void through which the subject emerges: Its actions, relations, and wishes are constantly ruptured by itself, and it cannot be put to rest. The Kleinian subject is threatened because it is overpowered from its origins by a force which it cannot control. 'She was seen as bringing the death drive under the sway of a subject, as making the death drive constitutive of a subject, who is not yet enough of a

³⁵ Frosh, *The Politics of Psychoanalysis*, 123.

³⁶ Melanie Klein, "A Study of Envy and Gratitude (1956)," in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1986), 212.

³⁷ Hanna Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein* (London: Karnac Books, 2008), 26.

³⁸ Segal, 55–57.

³⁹ Lyndsey Stonebridge and John Phillips, eds., *Reading Melanie Klein* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 39.

subject for death to be mastered or controlled.⁴⁰ Reading Klein's death drive from this perspective allows us to assess her theory against a historical background: the ruins of the two world wars, the fragmentation of the social bond and the impact of a colonial myth in the visualisation of origins of development. Furthermore, it allows us to explore how the death drive becomes an orifice within the subject which challenges its integrity. More troublingly so, it is by acknowledging the importance and weight of the death drive that its colonial roots can be scrutinised.⁴¹

It is clear that Klein's conception of the character of the death drive is fundamentally originating from that of Freud's. Freud saw the origins of the individual and culture as emerging through an act of incorporation (cannibalism) of the primal father. Klein also saw the origins of infancy as fundamentally open to the incorporation of the external world, coated with a colonial excess according to which the infant wants to aggressively devour its primary objects:

As the individual repeats biologically the development of mankind, so also does he do it psychically. We find, repressed and unconscious, the stages which we still observe in primitive people: cannibalism and murderous tendencies of the greatest variety. This primitive part of a personality entirely contradicts the cultured part of the personality, which is the one that actually engenders repression.⁴²

It is clear that Klein shaped her psychology as an antithesis where these so-called primitive, cannibalistic, and murderous urges are theorised in juxtaposition with the 'cultured part of personality.' Furthermore, if the character of the constitutional drives derives its quality from Freud's evolutionary and colonialist framework, psychoanalytic theories such as Klein's inevitably become infiltrated by an economy of colonial dichotomies alongside rigid and devoured boundaries.

For Klein, the drives are thought of as affecting psychic mechanisms and being managed through relations with external objects, rather than being 'directionless psychic urges.'⁴³ Klein was interested in how the death drive organised psychic life in terms of positions: the paranoid-schizoid position, the earliest form of

⁴⁰ Rose, 150.

⁴¹ Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms (1946)," 183.

⁴² Melanie Klein, "Criminal Tendencies in Normal Children (1927)," in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1975), 170.

⁴³ Frosh, *The Politics of Psychoanalysis*, 122.

managing destructiveness through splitting, and the depressive position, a more complex, integrated organisation. These two positions are successive and describe the nature of mental representations of the instincts, in what Klein defined as 'phantasy'. 'Phantasy' is the unconscious representation of instincts which takes the form of objects from the external, real world: '[T]hus an inner world is being built up in the child's unconscious mind, corresponding to his actual experiences and the impression he gains from people and the external world, and yet altered by his own phantasies and impulses.'⁴⁴ The idea of phantasy as becoming more tolerable as the infant moves from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position is that which renders Klein's theory of development as an evolutionary one, overturning in a way, the pessimism of Freudian psychoanalysis and toning down the colonial excesses of the death drive. Klein's conception of the paranoid-schizoid position is overflowing with images of devourment and aims at undermining the utopian assumptions of the untroubled, serene early years of life.⁴⁵ The infant, which is equipped with a fragile ego, experiences heightened anxiety, which it manages by projecting it outwards on the maternal breast. Klein argues 'that oral-sadistic impulses towards the mother's breast are active from the beginning of life, though with the onset of teething the cannibalistic impulses increase in strength.'⁴⁶ To see the infant's phantasy in terms of wishes to cannibalise the external objects is to fundamentally grasp the character of the death drive as the force guiding the object relations. More crucially, Klein asserts

These phantasies, although they are still centred on eating up the mother's breast or her whole person, are not solely concerned with the gratification of a primitive desire for nourishment. They also serve to gratify the child's destructive impulses.⁴⁷

Overwhelmed by its own death instinct, the infant perceives the object as altered, as 'devouring.' The devouring breast becomes the primary, threatening persecutor.

⁴⁴ Melanie Klein, "Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States (1940)," in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1986), 148.

⁴⁵ Meira Likierman, *Melanie Klein: Her Work in Context*, 1st ed. (New York: Continuum, 2001), 2.

⁴⁶ Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms (1946)," 180.

⁴⁷ Melanie Klein, "The Early Development of Conscience in the Child," in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1975), 253.

However, Klein also argued that experiences of being fed and held make the infant fantasise about a good, gratifying breast which nourishes and strengthens it. The primary good breast 'acts as a focal point in the ego. It [...] makes for cohesiveness and integration and is instrumental in building up the ego.'⁴⁸ To protect the good from the bad breast the infant splits the object in fantasy. In the paranoid-schizoid position, the infant psychologically oscillates between two states: one in which goodness of the object becomes introjected and helps the infant grow, the other one in which the death drive is deflected (projected) outwards and diminishes the ego, hampering growth.⁴⁹ The good nurturing breast is a fantasy of endless and complete gratification, and it is necessary for development, as it protects the infant when threatened by the bad, devouring breast. The infant takes flight to the fantasy of the good breast 'as a means of escaping from persecutors.'⁵⁰

It may be noteworthy here to include Klein's final revision of the paranoid-schizoid position, as detailed in her 1957 paper *Envy and Gratitude*. Klein argues here that another implication of the death drive is the experience of envy for the good breast, since it 'possesses and enjoys something desirable' that the self does not have.⁵¹ Envy forces the infant either to want to be 'as good as the object', or—when this is not possible—to spoil the object by ruining all its goodness, destroying everything that is felt as good about it: to remove 'the source of envious feelings.'⁵² Since the aim of envy is the spoiling of the primal object, by 'putting badness, primarily bad excrements and bad parts of the self, into the mother,'⁵³ it requires an outward process that directs the aggression towards the mother's body: one that is conveyed through a projective mechanism. Klein believed that envy is not necessarily consciously expressed, but it can also operate in fantasy, attacking an object of pleasure and gratification and hence being 'directed against creativeness.'⁵⁴ Although there is a biting aspect in envious feelings, Klein attributed the oral-appropriating tendency to another emotion, often operating alongside with envy: greed. One of the basic differences of the

⁴⁸ Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms (1946)," 180.

⁴⁹ Melanie Klein, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict (1928)," in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1986), 116.

⁵⁰ Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms (1946)," 184.

⁵¹ Klein, "A Study of Envy and Gratitude (1956)," 212.

⁵² Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*, 40.

⁵³ Klein, "A Study of Envy and Gratitude (1956)," 213.

⁵⁴ Klein, 219.

two is that whilst envy concerns the destruction of the goodness of the object, greed aims at hijacking and violently appropriating this goodness through the mouth: '[...] completely scooping out, sucking dry and devouring the breast [...] its aim is destructive introjection.'⁵⁵ Both impulses emerge as soon as the good breast is experienced as a source of life. Thus, envious and greedy attacks at the breast signify that the object has to be exhausted by any means. In short, if envy shows its teeth, it is greed that consumes the object. On the other hand, the pleasurable experiences enabled the infant's feelings of gratitude. By arguing that breast-feeding gives rise to feelings of gratitude, Klein portrayed the oral relation to the breast as an excessive relationship, namely one that extends beyond the temporary bodily satisfaction of distress to a much more enduring emotional impact on, and the formulation of, the early self.

In summary, Klein has the paranoid-schizoid position as one in which both external objects and internal ones are split in ways that cannot be compromised: the objects are either ideal or persecutory. It is the death drive and its constitutional cannibalistic character, heightened during this phase, which produces the threatening objects in the first place. Hence, the infant becomes compelled to introject the good breast and does so in a vicious way because it is under a threat. As a result, the internalisation of the good breast is equally hampered by the death drive. Some links with colonial associations arise from this excessive splitting and vicious circles of projection and introjection. Firstly, Klein sees the infant as analogous to a little cannibalistic monster who cannot know any boundaries, who greedily depends on others for nourishment, and who fantasises about dismembering, cutting and biting the mother—which sounds all too similar with the colonial imageries about what would the cannibals do to the imperial, male body of the conquistador. Secondly, for the infant, the absences of the mother are interpreted as its destructive impulses have succeeded

A little child which believes, when its mother disappears, that it has eaten her up and destroyed her (whether from motives of love or of hate) is tormented by anxiety both for her and for the good mother which it has absorbed into itself.⁵⁶

Yet, despite this racialised portrayal, it is just as possible that the devouring

⁵⁵ Klein, 213.

⁵⁶ Melanie Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States (1935)," in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1986), 121.

impulses can pull the infant out of this threatening state, into one that is synonymous to whiteness. The fear of losing the mother because of one's own cannibalism is that which creates the precondition of conscience and of the depressive position.

4.5 Depressive Position and Reparation

Klein's theory of the depressive position is a great example of how the dividedness of interwar Britain brought the need for integrated psychic states. In her 1935 paper *A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States*, Klein introduces the idea of the depressive position as one in which the split between the persecutory and the idealised object weakens. Objects could now be perceived as both loved and hated, 'and in addition to this [...] the real objects and the imaginary figures, both external and internal, are bound up with each other.'⁵⁷ In the depressive position the projection of badness into external objects becomes mitigated, and the expectation of an idealised, gratifying object shattered: thus, the subject builds more complex relationships on the basis of ambivalence. For Klein, the depressive position is not a final state or an achievement that can be accomplished but rather it involves a constant tension and negotiation of one's aggression. This is because unlike the paranoid-schizoid position where the death drive can be dealt through splitting (it can be projected elsewhere so any engagement with it is avoided), in the depressive position, the death drive is being worked through. The depressive position is founded on the tension created by the death drive, giving rise to a persistent unsettlement—one that enables the emergence of ethical relations to others and allows greater possibilities for love, reparation, recognition, and awareness. Not only does this reading of the depressive position run counter to psychological utopias and dystopias (such as persecutory or idealised states and uninterruptedly gratifying objects), but also it hampers any effort to idealise the depressive position per se exposing it as a position. Thought this way, the depressive position allows the possibility of an ethical relation to the object since the subject takes responsibility for their aggression and experiences guilt for the other's well-being.

A question emerging thus, is what enables to transition from the more simple and uncomplicated management of the death drive in the paranoid-schizoid position to the more complex handling of ambivalence—I am using the words

⁵⁷ Klein, 141.

'simple' and 'complex' here cautiously since as Brickman has showed they are heavily charged with evolutionary assumptions.⁵⁸ Perhaps it would be a misunderstanding to assume that the transition from happens abruptly. Despite not being clearly spelled out, Klein implies that there is an in-between phase of fluctuations from which the depressive position arises. This psychic phase is characterized by defences 'directed against the "pining" for the loved object.[...] I formerly termed some of these methods *manic defences*, or the *manic position* because of their relationship to the manic-depressive illnesses.'⁵⁹ The purpose of this phase is to build defences to cope with the depressive anxieties that gradually emerge: These are omnipotent phantasies both of a destructive and a reparative quality. It is clear that the possibility of love and reparation emerges only in relation to innate destructiveness: 'Only when consideration has been given to the part that destructive impulses play in the interaction of hate and love,' Klein wrote in 1937, 'is it possible to show the ways in which feelings of love and tendencies to reparation develop in connection with aggressive impulses and in spite of them.'⁶⁰ The death drive sets the foundation of experiences of guilt and the emergence of conscience. The infant's fundamental fear is that in its attempt to internalize the mother, it has ended up devouring her. The loss of the mother—Klein thinks of the loss in terms of weaning—creates a vicious cycle whereby the infant finds herself guilty for having 'eaten' the mother, and thus losing the object on which she depends:

He finds himself constantly impelled to repeat the incorporation of a good object, partly because he dreads that he has forfeited it by his cannibalism—i.e. the repetition of the act is designed to test the reality of his fears and disprove them—and partly because he fears internalized persecutors against whom he requires a good object to help him.⁶¹

To better understand how the loss of objects works in Klein's theory, I turn to the work of Judith Butler who, despite not being a psychoanalyst, adopts a sympathetic and critical perspective towards Kleinian psychoanalysis, and highlights its implications for the social. Butler has noted that there are two stages in the experience of the loss of the mother: first, the mother is lost externally (the mother goes away from the infant), and second, the mother lost internally

⁵⁸ Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind*.

⁵⁹ Klein, "Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States (1940)," 151.

⁶⁰ Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945*, vol. 1, *The Writings of Melanie Klein* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1975), 306.

⁶¹ Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States (1935)," 119.

becomes the mother 'anew, lost as introjected object.'⁶² For Klein, when the maternal object is precariously possessed, her physical absence makes the internal object lost as well. This is because in the earliest stages of development there is an 'excess of cannibalistic impulses in the subject' which leads her introjection to miscarriage.⁶³ Remarkably, for Butler, the negativity of Kleinian theory means that there is no possibility to possess the mother in a non-precarious way (as we will see later, there is only the possibility to deny the loss), the introjected object is always precariously possessed because the death drive constantly prevents security. 'Introjection, for Klein, cannot be sustained [...] in effect the ego, in its cannibalism, consumes the introjected object.'⁶⁴ Therefore, Butler's account of Kleinian development does not take as its aim the secure possession of internal objects and the victory of love over hate. Instead, it proposes the possibility of the psychoanalytic subject in the depressive position as having the capacity to check its innate sadism and withdraw from destruction. Butler explained that once the introjected object is lost, the infant has no one else to blame but itself. Guilt, rage, and aggression are thus channelled against the infant's own hatred creating the capacity for a self-reflection that holds the ego accountable for the impact of its aggression.

Every ego carries the potential to destroy the objects that form the world of its psychic attachments, and so every ego must have its sadism put in check by a super-ego that turns out to be nothing other than the reflexive rerouting against the ego of that primary aggression.⁶⁵

For Klein the experience of losing the mother then, triggers the emergence of the super-ego, which is eventually the agency that keeps aggression and hostility inwards, and restrains the death drive. Remarkably, for Klein the cannibalistic component of the death drive is preserved and—echoing Freud—makes aggression a force of self-devourment:

The child himself desires to destroy the libidinal object by biting, devouring and cutting it, which leads to anxiety, since awakening of the Oedipus tendencies is followed by introjection of the object, which then becomes one from which punishment is to be expected. The child then dreads a punishment corresponding to the offence: the super-ego

⁶² Judith Butler, "Moral Sadism and Doubting One's Own Love," in *Reading Melanie Klein*, ed. Lyndsey Stonebridge and John Phillips (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 180.

⁶³ Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States (1935)," 117.

⁶⁴ Butler, "Moral Sadism and Doubting One's Own Love," 180.

⁶⁵ Butler, 182.

becomes something which bites, devours and cuts.⁶⁶

What Butler puts to the fore is that the concern for the other's preservation, 'anxiety [...] about the safety of the object of love,⁶⁷ is the primary step for the mitigation of the death drive. Thought this way the Kleinian psychoanalytic subject—through Butler—is one structurally capable of being ethical, and even more, agency means recognising that survival depends on the preservation of the other.

But, as briefly mentioned previously, there is another response to the loss of the mother, which Klein explains in the context of manic defences and manic reparation. Prior to the emergence of the depressive position, the perception of the maternal object is still a partial one: hence, the mother that is experienced as lost is not the whole mother of the depressive position, but the idealised, blissful and gratifying breast of the paranoid-schizoid position. Once the idealised mother is experienced as lost, Klein writes in *The Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States*, '[t]he ego feels *impelled* (and I can now add, impelled by its identification with the good object) to make restitution for all the sadistic attacks that it has launched on that object.⁶⁸ 'Not until the object is lived *as a whole* can its loss be felt as a whole.'⁶⁹ The loss of the partial object does not trigger the ethical responses and reparation of the depressive position, but what Klein calls 'manic reparation,' which has to do with 'the desire to control the object, the sadistic gratification of overcoming and humiliating it, of getting the better of it, the *triumph* over it.'⁷⁰ In fact, Klein writes that this type of reparation might be overwhelmed by the desire to control the object that 'the benign circle started by this act becomes broken.'⁷¹ This is because this early process of mourning concerns the lost idealised object. This mourning process is doomed to fail because the idealised object does not exist, and hence, it can never be repaired. Therefore, for Klein it all boils down to how much of the mother has to be introjected: too much introjection, and she is devoured (cannibalism), too

⁶⁶ Klein, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict (1928)," 71.

⁶⁷ Butler, "Moral Sadism and Doubting One's Own Love," 183.

⁶⁸ Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States (1935)," 120. My emphasis.

⁶⁹ Klein, 118.

⁷⁰ Klein, "Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States (1940)," 153. Emphasis in the original.

⁷¹ Klein, 153.

little and the ego is helplessly unable to grow.⁷² In the latter version the ego falls ill of melancholia whereas, in the former, an object relation with the mother founded upon domination and annihilation is initiated.

What is important for the argument of this project, however, is the way Klein constructs the psychoanalytic fantasy of manic-reparation. While the subject in the manic position is ‘hungry for objects,’ which means that a defense mechanism enables her to introject good objects in order to manage the death drive, ‘the manic subject denies the different forms of anxiety associated with this introjection.’⁷³ It is thus enmeshed in the tension between the indispensable dependence on external objects and the denial of the precariousness dependence on the social world entails. What the manic subject denies, Klein expounds, is ‘his own concern for the object’s safety.’⁷⁴ This denial manifests as contempt and disparagement for the introjected object, which Klein describes as ‘a cannibalistic way’ of incorporation—no object can be good enough as the primary, idealised breast.⁷⁵ What the ‘cannibalistic’ adds to the introjection here, is that once the mother has not been experienced as whole, the subject is incapable of forming ethical relations—she is entrapped in a vicious circle of control, domination, sadism and contempt which, according to Klein, resemble a racialised canon of cruelty. The question following from this is who is this manic subject or who is the subject to whom whole objects are not available?

On the one hand, Klein’s theory seems to address the racialised subjects who in the white imaginary can only be perceived as partial; idealised or persecutory—perhaps just as Klein herself was perceived as an ‘exotic’ Egyptian princess and a ‘madwoman.’ In this sense, the contribution her theory makes is that in the racialised imaginings brought by colonial racism, the fragmentation of the social world and the partial objectification of the bodies of colour limits their capacity to be mourned, as much as it limits their capacity to be introjected as whole. Furthermore, it is the subject of manic reparation, of cruelty and domination to whom Klein attributes a racialised savagery, turning colonial racism on its head. On the other, Klein proposes that if the experience of mourning for the

⁷² In the latter case, Klein argues that the infant takes refuge in the mechanism of manic reparation: a desperate response to control the loved object since it is not securely attached inside and is constantly under the threat of annihilation. Klein, “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States (1935).”

⁷³ Klein, “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States (1935),” 163.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ .

loss of the whole object are the only preconditions for keeping the death drive at bay, the depressive position then, perhaps approaches a post-colonial form of subjectivity: one that is fundamentally incomplete, imperfect and structured around the ordinary melancholic acknowledgment of this loss (what in Lacanian theory would be understood as a fundamental ‘lack.’ However, for Klein, this process entails the moderation of racialised forces, wishes and object-relations within the subject. Since the depressive position is dependent on the withdrawal of cannibalistic fantasies, it follows that it is a position of an incomplete and precarious whiteness. Vexed in the politics of reparation in the aftermath of the Second World War, Klein’s ethics leave the question of race—as exemplified by the cannibal trope—unresolved.

4.6 ‘She’s a Man-Eater’: Femininity and Motherhood

So far, we have seen how, for Klein, the cannibal trope becomes the prototype of the messiness, intensity, and intrusiveness of the early mother-infant relationship. Not surprisingly for the ‘idyll of early fusion with the mother,’ Klein offers ‘proximity as something which devours.’⁷⁶ Contrary to Freud, in Klein, it is the mother, not the father, who is the central figure of development. However, her account of femininity and motherhood has been criticised by feminist theorists as recuperating patriarchal views.⁷⁷ Klein’s views towards women were not particularly sympathetic. Her biographer, Phyllis Grosskurth argues that Klein’s theories of femininity and motherhood have been irrecoverably influenced by her personal experiences of being a daughter, a mother and a mother of a rapidly growing psychoanalytic movement in London, challenging the Freudian, paternal heritage.⁷⁸ Klein’s relations with the women of her life had been difficult and troubling—she was the least wanted child in her family, she had a disquieting relationship with her mother Libussa, and an equally troubling relationship with her daughter Melitta Schmideberg (whom Klein had analysed as a child), and who as well became a psychoanalyst, though not a Kleinian one.⁷⁹

Klein believed that while the Oedipus complex ordinarily resulted in a male

⁷⁶ Rose, “Negativity in the Work of Melanie Klein,” 140.

⁷⁷ Amber Jacobs, “The Potential of Theory: Melanie Klein, Luce Irigaray, and the Mother-Daughter Relationship,” *Hypatia* 22, no. 3 (2007): 175–93; Luce Irigaray, “The Bodily Encounter with the Mother,” in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1991).

⁷⁸ Grosskurth, *Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work*.

⁷⁹ Grosskurth.

subjectivity complete and secure, the female one would always remain incomplete and unfinished. The reason for this fundamental difference was the gendered identifications during the Oedipal phase. Until the emergence of the Oedipal phase, children went through the ‘femininity phase’ in which they identify with the mother—in a stark opposition to Freudian development who believed there was no maternal identification. In that phase the father is only understood as a partial paternal object—as another source of care and comfort that can substitute the unbearable loss of the breast. ‘The father’s penis quickly becomes both to the little girl and the little boy an alternative object of oral desire to be turned to away from the breast.’⁸⁰ However, in the transition from the oral to genital stage the gendered trajectories change. For the boy the transition from the mouth to the genitals means that he develops a desire to penetrate the maternal body, to combat, and vanquish ‘his father’s penis inside [the mother] by means of his own penis.’⁸¹ The boy needs to establish a good relationship with the mother and build a good internal maternal object which results from the victory over the maternal penis—a victory of this kind would also be a proof that he is able to get the better of the internalized assailants in his own body as well.⁸² For the boy, the femininity phase dissolves when the identification with the father begins to counterbalance his anxiety about being castrated by the mother. Due to the anatomically visible sameness of the penis, Klein argues, the boy *is* ‘made in the image of’ his ideal, and therefore, the modelling of the boy in accordance with the father’s image ‘is not unattainable.’⁸³ The identification with the father strengthens the boy’s sexuality and moderates its innate sadism.

For Klein, the vagina presents a similar receptive tendency as the mouth, and thus, the girl’s desire to introject the penis—either as an object of gratification, or as an Oedipal one—is much greater than that of the boy. In addition to that, the omnipotence of thoughts characteristic of the early Oedipal conflict leads the girl to the belief that she has actually incorporated the father’s penis. The Kleinian formulation of female development involves stronger Oedipal incorporation which makes the girl ‘more subordinated to her introjected father.’⁸⁴ To counteract the internalised father, and to acquire a gendered identity, the girl

⁸⁰ Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*, 110.

⁸¹ Melanie Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, trans. Alix Strachey (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1960), 331.

⁸² Klein, 331.

⁸³ Klein, “Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict (1928),” 81.

⁸⁴ Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, 274.

introjects the mother which instils in her the maternal super-ego. However, this identification is hampered 'on the basis of an anatomical resemblance, owing to the fact that the internal organs [...] *do not admit of any investigation or test by reality*'.⁸⁵ The formation of the super-ego from the same-sex parent in the girl does not occur through genital identification (Klein here echoes Freud when seeing the external, female genital as an absence, which does not provide a solid basis for gendered identification), which results in a fundamental difference between the emergence of the female and the male self. Due to the unattainable genital identification with the mother, the girl attempts to identify through their internal similarity: the role of motherhood and the capacity to have babies. However, this too turns into an '*unsatisfied* desire for motherhood,' 'since the mother's femininity is invisible and her interior is threatening,'⁸⁶ due to oral-sadistic projections which render the maternal object into a threatening object, and her dreadful internal as a potential source for retaliation. Female anxiety is not counteracted, as in the male, through the reality of the penis for the male position: The girl's 'inability to know anything about her position' aggravates her fears of her internal objects as destroyed or damaged.⁸⁷

It is crucial to note that Klein regarded this theory as an unconscious representation of male and female psychosexual development, ignored the socially constructed assumptions around genital characteristics, and instead assumed the penetrating and receptive capacities to be ordered by a biological character. Moreover, contrary to Freud's view of the female super-ego as significantly weaker, Klein believed that the female 'super-ego becomes raised to very great heights [...] and that her ego looks up, and submits itself to it'.⁸⁸ The female ego is much more submissive to the super-ego and hence frequently censored and restrained, tied from birth to a state of precariousness: 'Thus whereas in the man it is the ego and, with it, reality-relations which mostly take the lead, so that his whole nature is more objective and reasonable, in the woman it is *the unconscious* which is the dominating force.'⁸⁹ The excessive orality attributed to the girl that is amplified due to anatomical receptiveness and the incapacity to identify with the mother on the basis of genital similarity, allows the formation of two female positions: one that submits the unconscious

⁸⁵ Klein, 319.

⁸⁶ Kristeva, *Melanie Klein*, 2:124. Emphasis in the original.

⁸⁷ Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, 287.

⁸⁸ Klein, 320.

⁸⁹ Klein, 320. My emphasis.

dominating force to the harshness of the super-ego ‘the melancholic woman’, and the other that eschews it through identification with the masculine and the ‘imaginary ownership of the penis’⁹⁰: the phallic-woman. Female subjectivity is then seen as constitutionally incomplete and condemned to a state of discontent. Klein vividly illustrates the relation between the cannibal trope as a gendered trope that makes the female subject more sexually threatening and aggressive. Her body resembles a devouring mouth or a vagina dentata and ‘her phantasies [are that] her vagina and body as a whole are destructive to her partner and that in *fellatio* she will bite off his penis and tear it to pieces.’⁹¹

The only way to counter her constitutional cannibalistic nature is to achieve a positive incorporation of the paternal penis with which she can repair the damage done to the mother.⁹² Therefore, not only is the identification with the mother unattainable, but also the retreat of devouring sadism into the depressive position is equally impossible to achieve (unless adopting a masculine position), leaving the female confined in the in-between of the paranoid–schizoid and the depressive positions, that is, the body that is tied into an incomplete development. In this sense, the female mind cannot work through psychic conflicts internally without the equipment of the phallus, and is condemned to a developmental standstill which resembles, but is not identical to, what in the colonial imagery is represented by the racist smear of the primitive mind.

Furthermore, in Klein’s theory we find recurring fantasies of a devouring, omnipotent mother which enters the infant’s mind and colonises it. This motif sits close to the one suggested by Jean Laplanche whereby the infant is on the receiving end of enigmatic signifiers from the adult parent. For Laplanche, the infant is engaged in a process of ‘translation,’ a meaning-making process initiated from the parent in the form of an ordinary, albeit traumatic, seduction.⁹³

⁹⁰ Klein, 293.

⁹¹ Klein, 281.

⁹² Klein, 299–300.

⁹³ Laplanche also draws a distinction between what he calls ‘implantation’ and ‘intromission’; while the former constitutes an ordinary trauma for the infant, caused by being exposed into the unknowability of the adult world and experiencing its signifiers as invitations to decipher meaning, intromission is a much more violent form of seduction. Laplanche describes it as a form of high-jacking the infant’s mind, which went far beyond the ‘psychophysiological skin,’ and affected the mechanisms of understanding and translating the signifiers per se. While Klein does not make this distinction, still it is helpful to see their theories in a dialogue suggesting an ongoing relevance for the ‘colonising motif.’ Jean Laplanche, *Essays on Otherness*, ed. John Fletcher (London: Routledge, 1998), 136.

The maternal body becomes either ‘a kind of storehouse which contains the gratification of all [...] desires’⁹⁴ or a container of dreadful or threatening objects that persecute, castrate, and devour the child. Regarding the latter, feminist critics have argued that the representations of the mother as a devouring monster of Kleinian theory unravel the masculine symbolic structures through which the mother is understood. In addition to that, the violence against the maternal body which through projections makes her into a cannibalistic retaliatory figure belongs to a historical continuity of an archaic projection onto the mother of unacknowledged exploitation. ‘The mother has become a devouring monster as an inverted effect of the blind consumption of the mother.’⁹⁵ Apart from the theorisation of motherhood within the phallogentric symbolic structures, the representation of the mother as *devouring* has also another significant implication for Kleinian psychoanalysis. By bringing together the cannibal trope, the incomplete female subject and the threatening nature of the maternal figure, Klein crafts a representation of femininity and motherhood reminiscent of a colonial dichotomy, which comes to light not when we focus on the mother-daughter relationship that feminist scholarship has advocated for,⁹⁶ but on the mother-son.

In one of her earliest accounts of the Oedipal conflict, in 1928, Klein discussed how the invisible inside of the mother’s body becomes the object of the child’s curiosity. The point is that the mother, who is not yet recognised as a whole person, is seen as containing all the good objects the infant desires. This feeling is supported by the infant’s innate curiosity since it wishes both to explore and ‘*appropriate* the contents of the womb,’ and to take possession of them.⁹⁷ Interestingly, in this passage, the previously implied gender-neutral ‘child’ suddenly shifts to the one of a universal male in the exact following sentence, creating a gendered dynamic through the female, maternal body as a container of the objects of the first *male* conquest:⁹⁸ ‘*He* thus begins to be curious about

⁹⁴ Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, 284.

⁹⁵ Irigaray, “The Bodily Encounter with the Mother,” 67.

⁹⁶ Amber Jacobs, *On Matricide: Myth, Psychoanalysis, and the Law of the Mother* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Irigaray, “The Bodily Encounter with the Mother”; Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

⁹⁷ Klein, “Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict (1928),” 72.

⁹⁸ I am borrowing this observation from Sánchez-Pardo, *Cultures of the Death Drive: Melanie Klein and Modernist Melancholia*, who made use of the prompt transitions from male to female subjects in the Kleinian text as an index of the text’s unconsciously communicated utterances.

what it contains, what it is like, etc. So the epistemophilic instinct and the desire to take possession come quite early to be most intimately connected with one another [...]⁹⁹

In *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, written a year later, the dominating aspect of the mother-son relationship becomes even more explicit: '[H]er body will be a desirable place, though a place which can only be *conquered* with greater or less risk to himself.'¹⁰⁰ Klein makes clear that the precarious erection of a male subjectivity is dependent upon the risk of the conquest—which in this passage is linked to the benign desire for knowledge and for possession—of the maternal body. While the subject that cannot identify with the mother on the basis of reality that cannot contain objects without destroying them, and, that can love only melancholically and is characterized by excessive orality is essentially female, the infant that explores with curiosity the maternal body and exercises its desire for knowledge is essentially male. Conversely, the cannibal trope is one with which feminine subjectivity is invested whereas masculinity, instead of being considered as violently trying to possess the mother, is celebrated as having an epistemophilic tendency. The gender of the subject that explores and conquers is necessarily male just as the gender of the subject that devours and cannibalises is necessarily female. Even more, the male desire for domination and possession has always as object one reminiscent of the maternal.

In her 1937 paper *Love, Guilt and Reparation* Klein discusses the 'wider aspects of love' by explaining how the mother-infant dyad becomes *displaced* from the domain of the individual onto the social world.¹⁰¹ This is evident in the ways we speak about 'motherland', but more significantly, it manifests in the attitude towards the colonial exploration of new countries. In a profound maternal analogy, Klein offers an utterly nostalgic account of a brutal litany of colonial exploitation: 'In the explorer's unconscious mind, a new territory stands for a new mother, one that will replace the loss of the real mother. He is seeking the "promised land" — "the land flowing with milk and honey."¹⁰² By arguing that colonised territories stand for the maternal body, Klein addresses a particular power dynamic at play in the colonial discourse. This far too idealised and

⁹⁹ Klein, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict (1928)," 72. My emphasis.

¹⁰⁰ Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, 335. My emphasis.

¹⁰¹ Melanie Klein, "Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works (1921-1945)," in *The Writings of Melanie Klein*, vol. 1 (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1975), 333.

¹⁰² Klein, 334.

romanticised version of the motivation for brutal colonial exploitation conceals the malign ways with which colonized lands were objectified and feminised. The proximity here is blatant. In the colonial male phantasy, the colonized lands—reminiscent of the maternal nostalgic blissful dyad—were treated as threatening, devouring and were fantasised as populated with cannibals. Similarly, in Kleinian psychoanalysis the mother of the infantile phantasy is experienced as a dreadful and devouring figure, a cannibal. This remarkable analogy between psychoanalytic theory and colonial practice reflects the depth of the influence of the socio-symbolic structures to the theoretical representations of the feminine and the maternal. The penetrating and sweeping force of the colonialist discourse manifests in the profound ways it shaped Kleinian psychoanalytic knowledge, which is riddled with the trope of cannibalism. The maternal body is a racialised body, which can be colonised and conquered. The female body is also racialised in the sense that it is presented as having a devouring capacity which she has to turn either against herself (melancholia), or against others (and become a phallic, conquistador).

To sum up, I have tried to map the theoretical sites that are invested with the colonial trope of cannibalism and to argue that in Klein the cannibal trope becomes the trope of femininity per se. Instead of a castrated woman, Klein repairs the Freudian harm done to the female body with a woman and a pre-Oedipal mother–castrator, believed to hold a phallic omnipotence in the introjected penis in her womb. However, the inheritance of such femininity entails the inheritance of phallic power and forecloses possibilities for a separate symbolic role of the female.¹⁰³ Psychoanalytically speaking, the devouring capacity of the female invests the psychoanalytic excess in a gendered fashion: that which has to be repressed also appears to be threatening and capable of undoing the subject. Femininity thus moves from a Freudian mystery (what does a woman want?) to a Kleinian space of death and negativity that has to be foreclosed or it threatens to undo and to devour masculinity.¹⁰⁴

4.7 Conclusion

In the beginning of this chapter, I cited a story from Klein's early paper *Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art*, where, to highlight the daughter's

¹⁰³ Jacobs, *On Matricide: Myth, Psychoanalysis, and the Law of the Mother*.

¹⁰⁴ Rose, "Negativity in the Work of Melanie Klein."

reparative tendencies towards the mother through a series of portraits, Klein avoids commenting on the daughter's self-portrait as a black woman in the first place. Jean Walton has examined Klein's silencing of racial difference in this instance, and especially in the context of her theory of femininity. According to Walton, Klein displaces the racial difference within the unconscious fears of the daughter for a mother who is as vindictive as she is black (as in the daughter's identification): '[T]he white female imaginary is occupied not only by a fantasized retaliatory white mother but also a racially differentiated other. This other is not male, not white.'¹⁰⁵ The Kleinian female psychoanalytic subject is fantasised as a racialised otherness or regards the mother as a racialised other—an idyllic body to be conquered and its fruits and goodness to be consumed, or, as a devouring figure that colonises and has to be resisted. Although Klein's psychoanalysis offers one of the first systematic accounts of female sexuality and identity, femininity comes to the centre of analysis in a perverse way: it either silences black femininity or reclaims a colonial trope which makes women aggressive, hostile and guilt-ridden. This means that Klein offers an account of female subjectivity where she relies either too much or too little on race as illustrative of difference. Should we need to take into consideration the Kleinian psychoanalysis for post-colonial ends, then we are presented with a treadmill of racialised representations that cannot be bypassed, and more crucially, they do not allow room for racial difference as a lived experience, and not as an unconscious impulse.

In this chapter, I wanted to show how pervasive the cannibal trope is in Kleinian psychoanalysis. Klein is the most obvious thinker to discuss alongside fantasies of boundary transgression and entering the other's mind. Having examined the main pillars in Klein's theory of psychosexual development, I have traced how Freud's evolutionary framework has survived in Klein, theorising infancy, as the origin of subjectivity, through the colonial mythology of cannibalism. Furthermore, I have also looked at how Klein pursues the assumption of a biological predisposition to transgressing the boundaries of the other, and how in using the cannibal trope as a prototype for mother-infant proximity, Klein brings race under the sway of the subject. Klein's developmental theory is structured as a racial achievement: The transition from the paranoid-schizoid position into the depressive position is marked as a transition away from cannibalistic impulses, irrational fantasies, and persecutions towards an ethical

¹⁰⁵ Walton, *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams: Race, Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference*, 36.

subjectivity that is fundamentally white. Last but not least, I focused on how racial difference is managed in the context of Klein's account of sexual difference. Looking at the Oedipus complex for the boy and the girl as crucial processes in gendered subjectivity, I argued that, in Klein, sexual difference is also a form of racial difference. The cannibal impulse informs the infant's fears of its mother, the girl's sexual impulses towards the male body, the mother's power against her baby, and as a result, Klein leaves us with categories that cannot be thought of as separate, but as linked through racial forms of domination, as in, femininity and masculinity, black woman and white woman, the mother and the infant. In the following chapter I will examine how the psychoanalytic inheritance of the colonial imagery of the cannibal trope, from Freud's mythology of origins to the mythology of the mother-infant relationship, is carried in a colonial context. I will focus on the work of Géza Róheim, the first anthropologically trained psychoanalyst, and his theory of the psychosexual development of Australian Aboriginals where black motherhood is considered to be literally cannibalistic.

CHAPTER FIVE

'A Child is Being Eaten': Géza Róheim and the Ethnic Psychoanalytic Subject

5.1 Oedipus, Culture and Universality

While the previous chapter draws out the logic of the cannibal trope in Melanie Klein's theory of psychosexual development as racialising development and informing sexual difference, this chapter inquires into the case of Géza Róheim and places the cannibal trope in the conversation between psychoanalysis and anthropology. The debate between psychoanalysts and anthropologists was inaugurated in the mid-1920s by the Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski who regarded psychoanalysis as fallacious in its dependence on the patriarchal character of the Oedipus complex.¹ In his anthropological fieldwork in the Trobriands of New Guinea, Malinowski claimed to have found evidence for a yet unexplored sociological component in psychoanalysis that made it problematic for non-European use. That is to say, more precisely, Malinowski showed that the Trobriands were a matrilineal society where the father's role is not as the mother's husband. The children belong to the mother's community and it is the uncle who represents 'the principle of discipline, authority, and executive power within the family.'² Paternal kinship is not recognized but remains as a social relationship to which the children turn 'only for loving care and tender companionship.'³ Malinowski then concluded 'the hate is removed from the father and placed upon the maternal uncle.'⁴ Without explicitly opposing the Oedipal function, Malinowski's anthropological observations posed a compelling challenge to psychoanalysis regarding the 'sociology'⁵ of Freud's schema because the Oedipus complex was too dependent on patriarchal family structures: '[I]n our type of family we have the authoritative, powerful husband and father backed up by society. [...] he is the bread-winner,'⁶ thus, raising questions about the cultural

¹ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1937); Bronislaw Malinowski, "Psychoanalysis and Anthropology," *Psyche* 4 (1924): 293–332.

² Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, 11.

³ Malinowski, 11.

⁴ Malinowski, 139.

⁵ Malinowski, 94.

⁶ Malinowski, 11.

relativity of psychoanalysis.

While Malinowski's questioning of the applicability of the Oedipus complex beyond a European context hit home, his critique remained misleadingly foreign to psychoanalysis. Malinowski missed the point of the unconscious altogether in 'looking for *facts* and for *conscious, rational reasons* for the patricidal act.'⁷ He ignored the metaphorical nature of psychoanalytic concepts and privileged observation over interpretation: 'After all neither group-marriage nor totemism, neither avoidance of mother-in-law nor magic happen in the "unconscious;" they are all solid sociological and cultural facts, and to deal with them theoretically requires a type of experience which cannot be acquired in the consulting room.'⁸

In 1924, three years before Malinowski's notorious challenge to the Freudian Oedipal universality, a young Hungarian anthropologist and analysand of Freud's cordial friend and colleague Sandor Ferenczi wrote a paper on applied psychoanalysis, titled *Australian Totemism*. The paper was a tribute to Freud's theory of totemism, and by following the steps of its inspirer, it reviewed ethnographical material on the Australian Aboriginal culture, the study of myths, rituals and magic to provide support to the Freudian theory by arguing for the validity of the psychoanalytic hypothesis of the primal crime.⁹ The author claimed to have found evidence of the acting out of the murder and cannibalism of the father in Australian mythology, and thus a proof for Oedipal wishes in a non-European context. However, he argued that given that Freud's primal crime marks the passage to culture, religion, and language, it is highly unlikely that myths can capture the historical reality of a pre-language epoch.¹⁰ Instead, the only possible way for this to happen is through a projection of the cultural role of the father to the prehistory of mankind: '[T]he general tendency is the projection of ontogenetic into phylogenetic beginnings.'¹¹ Without cancelling the Freudian hypothesis, he supported the view that the story of civilisation's origins is a myth drawing its validity from the role of the father in the child's life. The author was Géza Róheim, and his paper received the International Literary Prize for Applied Psycho-Analysis as awarded by Freud, and it was published in English in 1925. It was also presented at the 6th International Psychoanalytic Congress in Hague, and Ernest Jones, in Freud's biography, briefly describes it as follows: 'Róheim

⁷ Rosine Jozef Perelberg, *Murdered Father Dead Father: Revisiting the Oedipus Complex*, The New Library of Psychoanalysis (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 99. My emphasis.

gave an astonishing extempore address in English on Australian totemism.¹²

The enthusiastic reception of Géza Róheim's essay by psychoanalysts was not matched in the responses from anthropologists. A review published in the journal *Folklore* three years later, written by the colonial anthropologist and administrator in Africa, N.W. Thomas, points out that the lack of unmediated engagement with the studied population undermined the paper's argument. 'When some qualified person,' Thomas prophetically writes, 'has investigated the unconscious of the uncultured peoples, and has shown that their mental make-up agrees in every important point with that of Freud's subjects, it will be quite time enough to begin to apply psychoanalysis to anthropological problems.'¹³ Another review, published anonymously in the *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (then named *Man*) shared the uncomfortable sense of reviewing a work that does not sit well with the contemporary inquiries of anthropology which were concerned with the question of to 'what extent the facts or theories of psycho-analysis can legitimately be used to explain the beliefs and habits of the less advanced people.'¹⁴ A few years later Freud, Ferenczi, and Vilma Kovacs (the mother of Alice Balint) with the financial support of the Princess of Greece and Denmark, Marie Bonaparte, prepared a series of fieldworks that would aim at 'the direct testing of psychoanalytic theory in the ethnographic field and the chance to collect empirical data.'¹⁵ In the words of Sydney's *Sunday Pictorial* of 13th January, 1929, Géza Róheim 'WILL ANALYSE PRIMITIVE MAN.'¹⁶

In 1929 Róheim and his wife, Illona, departed for an ethnographic expedition with the Aborigines of Central Australia. Subsequently they visited Melanesia,

¹² Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Lionel Trilling and Steven Marcus, 3rd ed. (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1993), 497.

¹³ N.W. Thomas, "Review: Australian Totemism. A Psycho-Analytic Study in Anthropology by Géza Roheim," *Folklore* 36, no. 3 (1925): 302.

¹⁴ C. G.S., "Review: Australian Totemism. A Psycho-Analytic Study in Anthropology by Géza Roheim," *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 26 (n.d.): 61.

¹⁵ Franz Alexander, Samuel Eisenstein, and Martin Grotjahn, eds., *Psychoanalytic Pioneers* (New York and London: Basic Books, INC., 1966), 274.

¹⁶ John Morton, "Less Was Hidden among These Children': Géza Róheim, Anthropology and the Politics of Aboriginal Childhood," in *Growing Up in Central Australia: New Anthropological Studies of Aboriginal Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. Ute Eickelkamp (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), 15.

Somalia, and Arizona in the United States.¹⁷ His ethnography of Australia, on which this chapter focuses, was the most significant and extensive of his studies on this expedition. This is for several reasons: Firstly, Róheim was already familiar with literature on Australian totemism, and therefore, he dedicated the greater part of his ethnographic journey to Central Australia where he stayed for ten months while he spent significantly less time in Somalia and Arizona—from one to three months, respectively.¹⁸ Secondly, Australia seems to hold a special place in the psychoanalytic imaginary both as a fantasy of the European prehistoric past and also as the place over which the racial conflict between Freud and Jung unfolded. As previously shown, Freud based his argument about the Oedipal origins of society in *Totem and Taboo* drawing on anthropological literature about Australia. Freud used the figure of the so-called primitive to juxtapose Jung's emphasis to Christianity with a myth that demonstrates the longevity of Oedipal wishes and claims to be the precursor of the Christian meal. If anything, Australia symbolised the imaginary space where racial differences and Oedipal tensions can be brought to light.

Róheim's anthropological training alongside his psychoanalytic background meant that he could introduce a different perspective onto practices that were traditionally perceived as racially specific, such as cannibalism, by working from the interstices between the two disciplines. While anthropologists were more attentive to questions of race and racial differences because of their direct engagement with non-white cultures, cannibalism was a thorny issue for them. Cannibalism hardly lost its grip in the fieldwork of Róheim's contemporaries such as Malinowski, Margaret Mead, and Ruth Benedict in the South Seas tribes, enriching them with sensationalist narratives. As Arens puts it, it is rather remarkable how anthropologists 'live among people eaters, but never get

¹⁷ Weston La Barre, "Géza Róheim: Psychoanalysis and Anthropology" in *Psychoanalytic Pioneers*, eds. Frantz Alexander, Samuel Eisenstein, Martin Grotjahn, (London: Basic Books, 1966), 272-281.

¹⁸ Géza Róheim, "Psycho-Analysis of Primitive Cultural Types," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 13 (1932): 2.

eaten.¹⁹ On the contrary, as an anthropologically trained psychoanalyst, Róheim was educated in a system of thought that entertained wider norms permitting him to regard cannibalism as evidence for unconscious aggression and not to balk at the existence of ‘real cannibals in the immediate family.’²⁰ Not only was Róheim keen on recognising the cannibal trope as an imaginary dynamic within the family, but also he situated it in the relation between the mother and the infant—and not the father and the son as Freud had argued. As was Melanie Klein, Róheim was analysed by Ferenczi (1915-1916)—in fact, the two analyses coincided. Róheim later became a full member of the Budapest Psychoanalytic Society. Despite his enthusiastic support for Freudian ideas, Róheim’s thought was also shaped by the emphasis of Hungarian psychoanalysis—and Ferenczi’s novelty—on the shift from the Oedipal conflict to the primary relation between the mother and the infant.²¹

One final issue that emerges from the contextualisation of his work is the psychoanalytic encounter with a non-European culture in the context of colonial domination. This is because the assumption that Australian Aboriginals have an unconscious, and thus can be analysed, creates a series of ethical dilemmas that need to be examined. Critical re-evaluations of Róheim’s fieldwork have suggested that his early texts were largely founded on a colonialist framework which makes his psychoanalytic theory a prime candidate for a ‘colonisation pursued by other means.’²² Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, for example, make the case that Róheim’s work legitimises the universality of the Oedipus complex through his ignorance of the paradoxical character of psychoanalysis. For

¹⁹ Walter Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 97. For example, Margaret Mead who was Róheim’s contemporary, as influenced by his work, in her 1935 ethnography *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Tribes* writes about a tribe of head-hunters and cannibals called Mundugumor who lived in the Eastern part of Papua New Guinea. Mead refers to this tribe as a particularly ‘gay, hard, arrogant people’ who were accustomed to eat members of a neighbouring tribe as part of a polemical feast that revealed their ferocity and ensured their domination in the area. Remarkably, in a footnote, she explains: ‘Here, as in all the discussions of war, head-hunting, and cannibalism, it must be remembered that the *present tense is used merely stylistically*, and the [Department of Home and Territories of the Commonwealth Australia] government has suppressed these practices.’ Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (London: George Routledge, 1935), 211–12.

²⁰ Géza Róheim, *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia*, ed. Werner Muensterberger (New York: Basic Books, INC., 1974), 72–73.

²¹ Judit Meszaros, *Ferenczi and Beyond: Exile of the Budapest School and Solidarity in the Psychoanalytic Movement During the Nazi Years*, *The History of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac Books, 2014).

²² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, *Classics* (London: Penguin, 2009), 171.

Deleuze and Guattari, psychoanalysis is dependent on the axiomatic character of the unconscious—believing in it becomes a ‘modern way of [...] being pious.’²³ There is not ‘truth of the unconscious,’²⁴ but only the interpretation attributed to what is assumed as a ‘symbolic lack,’ a ‘dead father’ or the ‘Great Signifier;’ ‘the latent presence of Oedipus appears only through its patent absence, understood as an effect of psychic repression.’²⁵ Once this absence is accepted (for them, this absence is not a given), then, the Oedipus complex can be understood as obscuring the manufactured character of the unconscious: ‘[It] is a mystification of the unconscious that has only succeeded with us by assembling the parts and wheels of its apparatus from elements of the previous social formations.’²⁶ Overall, just by assuming an unconscious structure, Deleuze and Guattari declare that the Oedipus complex becomes a self-explanatory and evident structure precisely because it resonates with already existing cultural grammars. For this reason, they argue that while Róheim examined through the psychoanalytic lens the colonised tribes, the affirmations about an Oedipus complex among them lie in the eye of the beholder: ‘[T]he tribes, daughters of the ethnologist, do not say Oedipus, although it is Oedipus who makes them speak.’²⁷ While their critique rightly acknowledges the colonising element in assuming the universality of the Oedipus complex and the psychoanalytic subject, it fails to account for the complexities and contradictions in Róheim’s work as well as the nuances of his ethnic psychoanalytic subject, resulting from his refusal to fully apply the Freudian model.²⁸

On the contrary, critics sympathetic to psychoanalysis such as Joy Damousi have pointed out that in his effort to deploy a ‘European model of analysing the self’ to unfold ‘the mystery of the primitive other,’ Róheim proposed a psychological similarity which humanised and attributed complexity to the Aboriginals whilst he contested the psychoanalytic figuration of the Aboriginal

²³ Deleuze and Guattari, 175.

²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, 175.

²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, 171.

²⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, 175.

²⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, 175.

²⁸ It is beyond the possibilities of this project to address the cataclysmic critique Deleuze and Guattari voice against psychoanalysis as a method and an epistemology. I will only juxtapose the already rehearsed argument about the emotional damage and pain of individuals where there is no such ‘patent absence’ or ‘symbolic lack.’ Stephen Frosh, *Identity Crisis* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1991); Anthony Elliott, *Concepts of the Self*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2014).

as representing the child-like state of pre-civilized humanity.²⁹ Róheim neither aimed to psychoanalyse the Aboriginals in order to cure them, nor did he intend to dissect the Aboriginal mind to test the Oedipal hypothesis in accordance with other European colonial epistemologies. Rather, applying a European model of analysis of the self, Róheim implied that the Aboriginal has the capacity to speak of himself about his own experiences, and paradoxically offered ‘a level of interrogation and analysis that renders indigenous subjectivity more complex than any other theorist writing at the time.’³⁰

So far, I have highlighted some of the tensions and contradictions that shaped the first ethnographically-informed theorisation of the psychoanalytic subject conducted by Géza Róheim. My aim has been to show how Róheim’s work is historically situated in the interstices between epistemological dichotomies such as psychoanalysis and anthropology; universality and particularism; the Freudian emphasis on the father and the Hungarian shift to the mother; the European and the Aboriginal unconscious. Navigating across these fluid boundaries, Róheim’s project is as fascinating as much as it is problematic. That is because Róheim was not interested in exploring the junctures of these dichotomies while he invested in examining new ways of being, new forms of social organisation, and sexual regulation away from the discontents of Western civilisation.³¹ Throughout Róheim’s work, we encounter an alleged superiority of the non-European societies compared to the European ones on the grounds of their less pathological sociological structures. In a sense, Róheim used the Aboriginal as a paradigm to admit to the importance of culture and environment for the individual’s well-being, which sounds rather idealistic, given the violence of colonial domination. This is Róheim:

But if the testimony of anthropology indicates anything, it shows that primitive man is free, untrammelled, and truly self-reliant in comparison with Medieval or Modern Man. [...] We, however, do not grow up as simply as that. The ‘introjected object’ is not only something we assimilate (and thereby increase our powers), it is also something in

²⁹ Joy Damousi, “Géza Róheim and the Australian Aborigine: Psychoanalytic Anthropology during the Interwar Years,” in *Unconscious Dominions*, ed. Warwick Anderson, Deborah Jenson, and Richard C. Keller (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 88; Joy Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2005), 96–98.

³⁰ Damousi, “Géza Róheim and the Australian Aborigine: Psychoanalytic Anthropology during the Interwar Years,” 89.

³¹ Robinson, *The Sexual Radicals: Reich, Róheim, Marcuse*.

us that says 'No' to whatever we are trying to achieve. Nor is it necessary to belabour the point that the very marked specialization and division of labour which are characteristic of complex societies do not make for any blithe self-reliance.³²

In this chapter, I explore Róheim's theory of the ethnic psychoanalytic subject as it emerges from his ethnography of Central Australia. Firstly, I examine the colonial and patriarchal policies in Australia targeting Aboriginal motherhood as cannibalistic. Secondly, I trace how the colonial discourse of the cannibal trope becomes amalgamated in Róheim's theory of Aboriginal motherhood. I explain Róheim's account of Aboriginal narcissism as strongly dependent on access to the maternal breast. I then investigate how Róheim shapes the psychosexual development of the Australian Aboriginal and especially the relation between the mother so-called cannibal and male subjectivity. I argue and address that while Róheim's ethnic psychoanalytic subject challenges the dominant colonial and psychoanalytic discourse, since he regards the Australian Aboriginal as happy and unrepressed, his theory is too dependent on the racialisation, dehumanisation, and silencing of the black Aboriginal mother through the trope of cannibalism. Therefore, in Róheim, we encounter a creative application and development of psychoanalytic ideas from the perspective of the colony alongside the sheer dependency on a subject who poses a cannibalistic threat.

5.2 Róheim in the Antipodes: Battleground and Laboratory

In her book, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia*, Margaret Jacobs suggests a radical rereading of settler colonialism in Australia through the prism of gendered and racial violence aiming at the effective elimination of Aboriginals by an institutionalised targeting of the mother-child relationship. To the colonial regime, Aboriginal tribes were a prime example of an uncivilised, contagious, and bestial people, the so-called 'dark races,' who hampered possibilities of national unity and social progress.³³ They were regarded as threatening to the white settlers: Their parenting and domestic lives were not compliant with Western rules, and therefore, their existence

³² Géza Róheim, *Magic and Schizophrenia*, ed. Werner Muensterberger and S.H. Posinsky (New York: International Universities Press, 1955), 51.

³³ Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 26.

presented an imperative to regulate and document their lives, their marriages, their families, and their communities. The Northern Territory that Róheim visited in 1929 had appointed, since 1927, as Chief Protector of the Aborigines, a man named Cecil Cook, who implemented harsh monitoring policies by fingerprinting all the Aborigines, obliging them to wear identity tags (according to Jacobs, the Aborigines called these ‘dog tags’), to live in segregated areas, and forcing marriages between white men and Aboriginal women with the aim of extinguishing the black population and biologically absorbing them into whiteness, i.e. a process the Australian officials called ‘breeding out the colour.’³⁴ Aboriginal parents, consistent with what would be expected of a racist view of black culture, were seen as parasitic and inferior, exemplifying an infantile mental status, less complicated and incapable of reaching the depths of the white mind, which inevitably threatened the advancements of whiteness.

Margaret Jacobs highlights the role of gender alongside race in the establishment of a socio-political colonial structure in which the black Aboriginal women were systematically silenced, denigrated, raped, and had their children removed, that is to say, they had their agencies robbed by being portrayed as cannibal-mothers. More precisely, through the work of white women reformers, Aboriginal women were evaluated as incompetent mothers based on their inaccessibility to food, their inadequate housing, and their lack of hygiene and clothing which all added up to the convincing evidence for their failure to follow the rules and mores of the Victorian tradition, making them prime candidates for child-removal policies.³⁵ A major tactic to exterminate the outgrowth of the black population in the continent was interracial marriages and removal of the so-called ‘half-castes’ children—children born from an interracial marriage—from their mothers. The children were educated in government-run boarding schools or religious missions which were believed to erase their savage background and absorb them into the white society.³⁶ In reality, according to Jacobs, what these boarding schools produced were an ‘industrious class of domestic servants and “respectable poor.”’³⁷ But above all, what these child-removal policies effected were a racial and gendered set of white women’s activists groups (known as

³⁴ Jacobs, 26.

³⁵ Jacobs, 88–98.

³⁶ Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940*. See especially Chapter 3, *The Great White Mother*.

³⁷ Jacobs, 62.

‘maternalists’) who saw an opportunity to fabricate white motherhood as both the superior model to look up to, and to become responsible for the protection of the Aboriginal children whose mothers were considered unfit.³⁸

One example of an advocate of child-removal policies was the case of an Irish journalist and anthropologist, and later Commander of the Order of the British Empire, Daisy Bates whose anti-Aboriginal racist politics made her the most famous author of cases of Aboriginal maternal cannibalism.³⁹ Bates moved to Queensland, Australia in 1883 to work as a governess. Until her death in Adelaide in 1951, she built an impressive career in journalism and anthropology. Having spent several years traveling around the Australian continent with her husband John Bates, a drover, she became acquainted with the indigenous tribes, their languages, and rites, and subsequently in 1904 she was asked by the Western Australian government to assist in collecting ethnographical material on the Aborigines. In 1910, she was invited to join the Cambridge University expedition led by the anthropologists A. R. Radcliff Brown and E.L. Grant in the North-west Australia, which fell apart after a few months.⁴⁰ Between 1935 and 1941, while working as a reporter for several Australian newspapers, she maintained the column under the title *My Natives and I*,⁴¹ which was incorporated into a book titled *The Passing of the Aborigines* (1938).⁴² Bates was a controversial figure and notoriously eccentric. She famously procured accusations of indigenous infanticide and cannibalism in an attempt to create ‘sensational portrayals of poor Aboriginal mothering.’⁴³ She claimed to have encountered mothers killing and eating their babies as early as 1900.⁴⁴ In 1911, she was photographed with nine aboriginal women at Peak Hill, and the picture’s caption read ‘every one... killed

³⁸ Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940*.

³⁹ Jacobs, 108–9; Ann Standish, “Daisy Bates: Dubious Leadership,” in *Seizing the Initiative: Australian Women Leaders in Politics, Workplaces and Communities* (Melbourne: The University of Melbourne, 2012), 93; Daisy Bates, *The Passing of the Aborigines: A Lifetime Spent Among the Natives of Australia*, 2nd (web) (Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, 2014)., see especially Chapter 9.

⁴⁰ Jacobs, 108–9.

⁴¹ Bates, *The Passing of the Aborigines: A Lifetime Spent Among the Natives of Australia*; Standish, “Daisy Bates: Dubious Leadership,” 92.

⁴² Bates, *The Passing of the Aborigines: A Lifetime Spent Among the Natives of Australia*.

⁴³ Jacobs, 124.

⁴⁴ Bob Reece, *Daisy Bates: Grand Dame of Desert* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2007), 86.

and ate her new-born baby, sharing it with every other woman in her group.⁴⁵ A year later, the state government offered her an unpaid position as ‘honorary protector of Aborigines.’⁴⁶ However, her book *The Passing of the Aborigines* was not well received. It was criticised as an indication of sensationalist journalism and self-obsession with the extremity of Aboriginal practices,⁴⁷ which made her lose her credibility and respect as an anthropologist because of her insistence on Aboriginal cannibalism.⁴⁸ In 1930, she collected broken bones and skulls which she believed were the remnants of a cannibalistic feast, and sent them for investigation at the University of Adelaide.⁴⁹ J.B. Cleland, a professor of pathology claimed that ‘she was misled by informants’⁵⁰ and the investigation showed that the bones were ‘undoubtedly those of a domestic cat.’⁵¹ Despite her sensational and imprudent character, Bates’ work and ideology forged a picture of black motherhood as ‘virtually pathological,’ which informed local governance policies promoting the removal and institutionalisation of black children.⁵² Just as importantly, Bates’ work, like that of several other white women, was defined against the infantile character of the Aboriginal psyche. Namely, within the patriarchal structures of colonial administration, white women used Aborigines to gain social and public position in the Australian colonialist regime. At the same time, Bates’ obsession with maternal cannibalism mirrors a process of racial discrimination toward the Aborigines by separating them into those whom can be exploited by the colonial settlement (mostly Aboriginal children and men), and those, the black mothers, who allegedly represented the most savage of the savages.

The discourse of race and gender in colonial oppression in Australia was bolstered by psychological assumptions about the Aboriginal tribes. Besides the colonial policies that aimed at the elimination of Australian Aborigines, liberal concerns about the gradual decrease in the indigenous population equally contributed to the colonial assimilation. Since the 19th century, evolutionary theorists had established the view that Aboriginal tribes in Australia held historical, cultural, and scientific value, and thus, had to be preserved by means

⁴⁵ Reece, 87.

⁴⁶ Jacobs, 143.

⁴⁷ Standish, “Daisy Bates: Dubious Leadership,” 99; Reece, *Daisy Bates: Grand Dame of Desert*, 87.

⁴⁸ Jacobs, 131.

⁴⁹ Reece, 88; Jacobs, 124.

⁵⁰ Reece, 87.

⁵¹ Jacobs, 124.

⁵² Jacobs, 131.

of study and taxonomy.⁵³ In Central Australia in particular, the fear of Aboriginal extinction led to an increasing attraction of European scientists who delved into ‘psychophysical testing, psychometrics, and Freudian analysis’ of the Aboriginal mind and body.⁵⁴ More precisely, Anderson suggests that psychologists studying Central Australian tribes presupposed a ‘common mental apparatus, or biological matrix’ that was shared between the European and the non-European mind.⁵⁵ For example, the neurologist Henry Kenneth Fry and the Australian psychologist Stanley D. Porteus used physiological and psychometric tests of the Aboriginal mind and body.⁵⁶ Fry and Porteus were preoccupied with the mental capacities and the intelligence of the natives, their physical particularities, and their resistance to pain. They submitted the Aboriginals to tests with mazes, jigsaw puzzles and line drawing to evaluate arithmetic understanding, spatial perception, and orientation.

Beneath the apparent neutrality and objectivity of these researches, they firstly situated the Aboriginal mind in relation with the European one, and secondly, they aimed at explaining the psychological status of the natives by means of the innate, natural inferiority of racial difference. For example, Fry believed that the reason why Aboriginals could not adjust to the colonial regime was not because it was toxic but because they held the ‘standard of intelligence of a white adolescent’ which prevented them from becoming incorporated to white civilisation.⁵⁷ Psychological researches offered evidence for racial inferiority as allegedly associated with low intelligence and lack of complexity of the Aboriginal mind. At the same time, they disengaged any correlation between colonial domination and psychological agony. ‘Investigators saw Arrente and others confronting hunger, dispossession, child removal, and family destruction—yet they could not let these struggles intrude on psychological assessment. [...] It just did not seem relevant.’⁵⁸ This significant denial of the colonial regime’s responsibility for the decay and decline in Aboriginal populations also permeates the work of Géza Róheim.

⁵³ Jock McCulloch, *Colonial Psychiatry and “the African Mind”* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 49.

⁵⁴ Warwick Anderson, “Hermannsburg, 1929: Turning Aboriginal ‘Primitives’ into Modern Psychological Subjects,” *Journal of the History of Psychology*, 129. *The Behavioral Sciences* 50, no. 2 (2014): 127–47.

⁵⁵ Anderson, 142.

⁵⁶ Anderson.

⁵⁷ Anderson, 135.

⁵⁸ Anderson, 144.

The only dissident voice was the British psychologist W.H. Rivers who associated the population reduction with the psychological impact of colonialism, having participated in the Cambridge Torres Straits Anthropological Expedition, that is, the first systematic anthropological and psychological examination of colonised tribes in the turn of the century. Rivers argued that the reason why Aboriginals were 'dying out' was caused either by the introduction of opium and alcohol, or the modifications of the native customs (clothing, housing, and so on) and prohibition of acts that were contrary to the 'principles of morality' (head-hunting in the Solomon Islands, separation of sexes in Fiji islands), which caused great changes in their everyday lives: The indigenous were basically 'deprived of nearly all that gave interest in their lives.'⁵⁹

When Géza Róheim arrived in the Hermannsburg Mission in Central Australia, he spent ten months in the company of Fry and Porteus. While my aim is not to explore to what extent he was influenced by the discourses of racial psychology of his colleagues, I would like to suggest that Róheim's work is caught in similar tensions and contradictions as those of his contemporaries. On the one hand, there is the tension between the naturalisation of racial difference, and on the other hand, the constructed cultural difference; the violent and oppressive colonial system and the displacement of savagery onto the Aboriginals, the apparent neutrality of European epistemologies and the racist bias of their conclusions. Last but not least, the tension between the universality of psychoanalysis and the anthropological particularity of kinship structures, cultural and religious rituals. And similarly, the tension between analyst and analysand:

[Y]our savage informant is not a patient. He does not come to you with a conflict that he desires you to help him with and he is certainly not willing to pay for the privilege of relating his dreams. In order to get into touch with him at all you must invert the usual analytic proceeding and offer him something instead of making him see the value of your work by paying for it. [...] Talking especially about himself means work for a primitive man he would not do it day after day without any recompense. Not only that primitive man is not a patient, but the amount of psychical strain he can bear is far smaller than a civilised man is prepared to cope with.⁶⁰

A certain relation between the 'privilege' of analysing one's dreams and 'the

⁵⁹ W.H.R. Rivers, "The Psychological Factor," in *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, ed. W.H.R. Rivers (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 93–94.

⁶⁰ Róheim, "Psycho-Analysis of Primitive Cultural Types," 15.

amount of psychological strain he can bear' is presumed in this passage, a relation that Róheim persistently pursued in his writings. In speaking and writing as a psychoanalytic authority, and at the same time, calling for the financial recompense of his informants, Róheim makes known that there is indeed an asymmetrical exchange between the white observer and the native colonised subject which must be bridged through the reversal of the financial relationship.⁶¹ On the one hand, Róheim recognises that psychoanalysis has nothing to offer to the natives. Instead, he seems to be arguing that it may only take something away from them, namely, their time and the luxury of not having to think and reflect about one's self. On the other hand, for Róheim the white psyche, albeit keener to cope with a great amount of psychological strain, seems to have gone a little too far in the process.

5.3 Aboriginal Narcissism, Orality and the Mother

In his work, Róheim puts forward two theses: Firstly, the Australian Arrente were a happy and psychologically content population because their culture was far less repressive than the European one. Secondly, this fundamental economical difference in happiness was due to the different upbringing of children. To explain cultural difference and its impact on psychology, Róheim explored early childhood experiences, and in particular, how the Arrente children related to their mothers during their first years of life:

All observers agree that the natives of Australia are a singularly pleasant people, easy to get on with, helpful to those who are in distress, and as unneurotic and free of anxiety as any human being could be. The strength of the mother-child tie explains this fully and confirms the psychoanalytic view on the decisive significance of the infancy situation.⁶²

Among the Arrente, good mothering is the reason for the wider culture of happiness. Despite growing up in an environment of scarcity and deprivation that 'can hardly be called favourable,'⁶³ the Aboriginals never display anxiety for

⁶¹ Three decades after Róheim's research expedition, the pioneer trio of ethnopsychanalysis Paul Parin, Goldy Parin-Matthèy, and Fritz Morgenthaler embarked on long fieldwork trips in West Africa, and suggested that their informants-analysands receive reimbursements for their time. The rationale was that the long conversations informants engaged with analysts were at the expense of their daily work in farming, harvests, or markets. Dagmar Herzog, *Cold War Freud: Psychoanalysis in an Age of Catastrophes* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 185-87.

⁶² Géza Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology: Culture, Personality and the Unconscious*, 2nd ed. (New York: International Universities Press, 1968), 57.

⁶³ Róheim, "Psycho-Analysis of Primitive Cultural Types," 78.

‘tomorrow’s meal.’⁶⁴ ‘That the native [...] is never worried about the future, and [...] regards nature as a bountiful mother, is too well known to need further proof. This well-known optimism is oral, i.e. derived from the behaviour of the mother in the nursing situation.’⁶⁵ From Róheim’s perspective, the Aboriginal mothers are extremely kind, lenient, and do not impose any form of boundaries on their young children. Mothers keep their children in close physical proximity, carrying them tied on their bodies; rocking and caressing them ‘much like a European mother does, by tenderly clutching it in both her arms.’⁶⁶ While Róheim acknowledges the existence of structures of communal motherhood that created a web of support during and after birth—camps where women would go to recover after birth—⁶⁷he, nonetheless, describes them as ‘yielding’ and ‘good and non-resisting,’ selfless and unconditionally caring, always available for the (male) child: ‘[H]e can always get the nipple when he wants it and he is never weaned until he weans himself.’⁶⁸ Women who breast-feed also offer their breasts to children other than their own.⁶⁹ This ‘state of communal motherhood,’ which guarantees that the child will not starve if the biological mother is not directly available,⁷⁰ is identified by Róheim as the reason why children do not experience deprivation and develop what he saw as a ‘healthy foundation of narcissism.’⁷¹

More precisely, Róheim connects narcissism with food and illustrates how the relation to the mother becomes not only the basis of the development of the ego but also determines the child’s well-being and his resilience to frustrations from the external environment. Róheim believed that infantile anxiety is not linked to an inner conflict between life and death drives but is ‘centered around object loss and *food trouble*.’⁷² Breast-feeding fosters the ‘incorporation of the mother or the identification with the mother,’⁷³ which strengthens the ego and prepares the child to protect himself against the trauma of separation from her. Although Róheim lacks a detailed account of how this process takes place psychologically, he mentions that ‘the internalized object is really the internalized mother—or

⁶⁴ Róheim, 78.

⁶⁵ Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology: Culture, Personality and the Unconscious*, 59.

⁶⁶ Róheim, 57.

⁶⁷ Róheim, *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia*, 65–66.

⁶⁸ Róheim, 75.

⁶⁹ Róheim, “Psycho-Analysis of Primitive Cultural Types,” 75.

⁷⁰ Róheim, 75.

⁷¹ Róheim, 106.

⁷² Róheim, *Magic and Schizophrenia*, 222.

⁷³ Róheim, 223.

rather, the internalized body contents of the mother.⁷⁴ His logic is that when the initial blissful breast-feeding does not impose the loss of the breast yet happens naturally (the child weans himself), the child develops a strong internal object to which he recurs when reality becomes traumatic.

Róheim did not fetishise this narcissistic stage arguing that there is no separation from the mother. Instead, he highlighted that due to varieties in cultural upbringing, it is possible that this loss is less damaging. After all, it is only that 'a minimal degree of inevitable frustration is enough to achieve this result.'⁷⁵ The Aboriginal children did separate from the maternal breast but their experiences of frustration were significantly less intense. 'The Australian is the direct opposite of our civilization with its schedules for feeding the baby and enforced training.'⁷⁶ To put it differently, Róheim conceived aggression as invoked by oral frustration, that is to say, when the child does not experience a satisfying feeding and is interrupted by the mother, the maternal breast turns from a good object into a bad one. In these cases, the child aims to regress to the maternal unity. 'Insufficient object love on the part of the mother is compensated by a fantasied identification with her.'⁷⁷ For Róheim then, when mothers allow the children to wean themselves, as in among the Arrente, 'frustration on the oral level is at a minimum.'⁷⁸ This is the reason why he considered them, despite their profound destitution, as generous and 'oral optimists.'⁷⁹

Róheim argues that the mother is not only 'unambivalently good' just as 'the son [is not] as generous as it might seem.'⁸⁰ Drawing on Daisy Bates, Róheim incorporates in his ethnography the view that Aboriginal mothers eat their children for various reasons. Arriving from the European psychoanalytic circles to the Lutheran Mission set up in Hermannsburg in Central Australia, one would not suspect that Róheim was unfamiliar with the imagery of excessive appetites

⁷⁴ Róheim, 222.

⁷⁵ Róheim, 30.

⁷⁶ Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology: Culture, Personality and the Unconscious*, 147.

⁷⁷ Róheim, *Magic and Schizophrenia*, 198.

⁷⁸ Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology: Culture, Personality and the Unconscious*, 149.

⁷⁹ Róheim offers an additional psychoanalytic explanation as to why the children are not traumatised by their mother's cannibalism. According to an old custom of the Arrente, he notes, only every second child was eaten 'to increase the strength and growth of the others.' Quite unexpectedly, Róheim explains that this ritual does not harm the child narcissism because of sibling rivalry. Rather, on the opposite, it bolsters it since the mother eliminates the newly born rival. Róheim, 61–62.

⁸⁰ Róheim, 63.

among the so-called primitives. But, unlike Freud who linked cannibalism with the father, Róheim sees it as a predominantly maternal practice:

Daisy Bates writes: 'baby cannibalism was rife among these central-western people as it is west of the border in Central Australia. In one group east of the Murchison and Gascoyne Rivers, every woman who had a baby had killed and eaten it, dividing it with her sisters, who in turn killed their children at birth and returned the gift of food, so that the group had not preserved a single living child for some years. When the frightful hunger for baby meat overcame the mother before or at the birth of the baby, it was killed and cooked regardless of sex'. But the mother never ate a child that she had allowed to live at the beginning.⁸¹

Róheim finds cannibalism an explicitly feminine issue: it is the manifestation of the black mother's destructive desire that harms younger generations. The role of Aboriginal culture is to regulate this desire by situating the child within the family's history—once a child had received the 'ancestral name,' it became 'a person independent of its mother,'⁸² which prohibited the mother from eating it. In several cases, he associates cannibalism with forced abortion. For example, he writes:

Patjili, a Ngali woman, told us that the Ngalis and Yumus eat their children or procure an abortion out of 'meat hunger.' They pull the child out by the head. Then they burn the placenta, roast the child, and eat it. The infant is eaten by the mother and the other siblings. The other children are supposed to eat it so that they may grow bigger, the mother does it because she is hungry [...].⁸³

That which is particularly remarkable about this passage is how Róheim does not see a more logical explanation: a woman procures abortion to protect her living children because of food deprivation ('meat hunger'), not because of her desire to eat them. In writing about Aboriginal motherhood, post-colonial feminist scholars have outlined that, in some cultures, mothers manifest their power to control their own bodies through their control over their choices regarding fetuses.⁸⁴ Infanticide was in many cases a statement of autonomous action and independence as well as an indication that motherhood means to be

⁸¹ Róheim, 62.

⁸² Róheim, 62; Róheim, *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia*, 72.

⁸³ Róheim, 61.

⁸⁴ Lynette Russell, "'Dirty Domestic and Worse Cooks': Aboriginal Women's Agency and Domestic Frontiers, Southern Australia, 1800-1850," *University of Nebraska Press* 28, no. 1/2 (2007): 34.

confronted with ethical dilemmas and responsibilities that are not always easy to deal with. Contrary to Róheim's perspective, Margaret Jacobs offers the voice of another contemporary anthropologist, Mary Montgomery Bennett, whose explanation for maternal cannibalism and infanticide was more attuned to the real injunctions and hardships of colonised motherhood:

[A] woman can carry one child in her long hunting day's trail; and that is a severe test of enduring love. It may be twenty miles to the evening meeting place. [...] If there are a child of two years and a new baby, what is their mother to do? She knows that if she tries to carry both children none of them will reach the meeting place. She kills the baby rather than leave it to the crows.⁸⁵

Róheim uncritically drew on the colonial discourse of the cannibal trope to illustrate Aboriginal mothers as ambivalent: cruel but passive figures who allowed their bodies to be sucked and consumed for the child's healthy narcissism to emerge, divested of any form of agency. Ignoring how it is the colonial administration that tore Aboriginal families apart and forced the indigenous populations into dispossession leads Róheim's theory to suggest an explanation that reiterates cannibalism as a racial and gendered predisposition—as a *maternal hunger*. This shift of savagery from the colonial institutions to the Aboriginal mother's nature matches the psychoanalytic canon since, as argued in the previous chapters, the cannibal trope functions as a form of otherness that defines the psychoanalytic subject. As it is argued more thoroughly through the rest of the chapter, this foundation of ambivalent motherhood allows Róheim to rephrase Freud's theory by situating at the core of a healthy non-aggressive masculinity a passive but cannibalistic mother. Lastly, to better grasp why children's narcissism is not affected by maternal cannibalism, we need to examine how Róheim views Aboriginal cultural structures that while allowing fantasies of punishment, castration, devourment, and threat, guide and protect children without oppressing them.

5.4 On Myths, Demons and Children's Play

The sense of passivity and permissiveness that permeates the first years of the Aboriginal child's life is juxtaposed with a rich mythology that is used to enforce prohibitions. Myths, Róheim believed, were constructed fantasies projected

⁸⁵ Mary Montgomery Bennett, *Hunt and Die: The Prospect for the Aborigines of Australia* (London: Anti-Slavery Society, 1950), 5.

into the outside world which actually originate from within the Aboriginal self. Their function is to contain 'a projection of hostility felt by the adults regarding the infants.'⁸⁶ In his later work, he rephrases this to include infantile aggression too: '[T]he demons verge towards two types: the child demon (child's hostility to parents), and the giant demon (parent's hostility to the child).'⁸⁷ As Róheim reflected on the significance of cannibalistic myths for the Aboriginals' psychic structures, he pointed out that they form a continuum between inner and exterior reality, and thus, they satisfy innate aggression by splitting off the aspect of the bad parent and maintaining it externally. Róheim writes:

It is not necessary to stress the parental quality of the monsters. They are frequently called by parental or grandparental terms, and they obviously represent the child's view (and projection) of the highly aggressive and sexual parents. The symbolism is not especially complex... The tales abound, in fact, with themes of castration, cannibalism, murder and coitus.⁸⁸

In his fieldwork observations, Róheim referred to one of the most important figures of Australian life and mythology, a sexually excessive and avoidant figure—ambivalently gendered, frustrating and complex: the *alkarintja* woman—literally meaning 'eyes turn away' [...] 'women who will not look at men, who are wild and run away at the sight of a male being.'⁸⁹ He described her as a mythical woman, an actual feminine trope and a 'conventional façade to be cast aside as soon as the opportunity presents itself.'⁹⁰ Analysing the dream of a member of the Arrente tribe, Yirramba Banga, Róheim claimed that *alkarintja* women 'are supposed to resist the amorous advances of the men.'⁹¹ These figures, however, are particularly persecutory: when these women appear in dreams, the dreamer must wake up immediately, alternatively the *alkarintja* woman 'cohabits with the man, but she takes the role of the male and makes the man play the part of the female.'⁹² Among the Arrente, the *alkarintja* woman is believed to be a creature that 'satisfies all sexual aspirations,' a mother with a penis,' an archetypical figure

⁸⁶ Róheim, 79.

⁸⁷ Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology: Culture, Personality and the Unconscious*, 60.

⁸⁸ Géza Róheim, *Children of the Desert II: Myths and Dreams of the Aborigines of Central Australia*, ed. John Morton and Warner Muensterberger (Sydney: Oceania Publications, 1988), 96.

⁸⁹ Róheim, *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia*, 122. Róheim, "Psycho-Analysis of Primitive Cultural Types," 49.

⁹⁰ Róheim, 124.

⁹¹ Róheim, "Psycho-Analysis of Primitive Cultural Types," 53.

⁹² Róheim, 53.

which existed ‘at the commencement of things.’⁹³

Of particular note, in this regard, is his interpretation of the latent content of the *alkarintja* concept: ‘[F]irst, and most important, the *alkarintja* is a representative of the mother-*imago*. The “eyes-turn-away-woman” is the mother who resists the demands of her son.’⁹⁴ Róheim believed that the particular way Arrente viewed the *alkarintja* woman was connected to a traumatic experience of childhood, according to which Aboriginal mothers slept on top of the child, ‘like the male on the female in cohabitation.’⁹⁵ Although the mothers argued that they covered their children with their bodies during the cold winter months, Róheim interprets this habit as the cause of the primary experience of masculine anxieties of being engulfed and excited by the maternal body as ‘a loss of his masculinity.’⁹⁶ ‘Such a habit,’ Róheim writes, ‘must clearly excite libidinal desires in the boys which they are not yet old enough to satisfy. It nearly fulfils their Oedipal wishes, but not quite [...].’⁹⁷ This physical contact with the mother stimulates the infant, producing a great amount of pleasure, which however, is ‘*too much for the ego*,’ and therefore it becomes traumatic.⁹⁸ The *alkarintja* in myths and dreams is therefore evidence for the unconscious, sexual, repressed fantasy projected into the outside world. She is created to fulfil the oedipal infantile wish: ‘[...] [S]he is inaccessible to the desires of her son. [...]’ and in accordance with the son’s wish, she is also ‘inaccessible to the love-making of his father.’⁹⁹

For Róheim the Arrente are regarded as a sophisticated culture which fully deals with the challenges of kinship and sexuality through mythology. He believed that the rich Aboriginal mythology of sexualised demons and cannibals helped the separation between sexuality and sadism whilst at the same time contributing to the disciplining and regulation of infantile sexuality. This splitting between good and bad parents is maintained throughout childhood, and it is only after the initiation ceremonies when the ‘re-introjection of these beings occurs [...] then they are changed from anthropophagous and phallic demons into protecting ancestors who are removed from all contact with women; anxiety gives way to

⁹³ Róheim, 53.

⁹⁴ Róheim, *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia*, 148.

⁹⁵ Róheim, “Psycho-Analysis of Primitive Cultural Types,” 53.

⁹⁶ Róheim, *The Riddle of the Sphinx or Human Origins*, 165.

⁹⁷ Róheim, 165.

⁹⁸ Róheim, “Psycho-Analysis of Primitive Cultural Types,” 55. Emphasis in the original

⁹⁹ Róheim, 51.

reverence, love and identification.¹⁰⁰

5.5 Sadism, Latency and the Super-Ego

Before showing how Róheim links children's sexuality with the emergence of a super-ego, it is worth highlighting Freud's views on the latency period since it appears to be a phase not only exclusively motivated by psychic and biological drives but also dependent upon cultural influence. Freud's psychoanalytic account of latency defines it as the period between the 'early efflorescence' of infancy and the emergence of pubertal sexuality during which the '*reaction-formations* of morality, shame and disgust are built up.'¹⁰¹ It is a time when the 'polymorphously perverse' infantile sexuality becomes repressed, the early affectionate impulses become 'inhibited in their aim or sublimated,' and this in turn explains why sexuality in children is seen as absent whereas Freud stresses that it is repressed.¹⁰² Repression endorses the 'wishful legend of the asexuality of childhood' and alleviates the child from the impulses of sexuality which are instead channelled in 'cultural activities of every kind.'¹⁰³ In a footnote added in 1935, Freud includes the assumption that latency is culturally dependent: '[T]he period of latency is a physiological phenomenon. It can, however, only give rise to a complete interruption of sexual life in cultural organisations which have made the suppression of infantile sexuality a part of their system. This is not the case with the majority of primitive peoples.'¹⁰⁴ The degree of interruption of sexuality, therefore, is directly dependent upon pedagogy, and it seems to be related not only to cultural differences but to 'racial' ones as well. As argued in Chapter Two, primitivity signified a condition of more liberty, less complexity, and a more natural expression of sexuality. Although Freud did not follow through the thread linking latency and the economical intensity of the super-ego, Róheim did: 'The main difference between Central Australians and Europeans lies not in the id, but in the range, depth, and function of the superego.'¹⁰⁵

During his fieldwork, Róheim spent several play analytic hours with children

¹⁰⁰ Róheim, *The Riddle of the Sphinx or Human Origins*, 157.

¹⁰¹ Sigmund Freud, An Autobiographical Study, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XX (1925-1926): *An Autobiographical Study, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety, The Question of Lay Analysis and Other Works*, 1925, 37.

¹⁰² Freud, XX:37.

¹⁰³ Freud, XX:39.

¹⁰⁴ Freud, XX:37.

¹⁰⁵ Róheim, *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia*, 255.

both living in the desert away from the mission and subjected to European pedagogical methods—the chief in the implementation of these was Reverend Albrecht. Róheim documents a few cases when Missionaries punished Aboriginal children, for instance, by locking one ‘in the boy’s house. The child roared and screamed for about an hour, at which point the Missionary gave him a beating.’¹⁰⁶ In response, the parents ‘threatened to kill the Reverend because he had been beating a child—an unheard-of thing.’¹⁰⁷ Róheim pointed out that while Aboriginal parents scolded their children, and frightened them by talking of demons that kidnap and eat children, their methods were effectively far from the ‘deliberate infliction of pain, the *sadistic pedagogy of the white man*.’¹⁰⁸ Aboriginal schooling ‘never means restrictions, giving up an infantile paradise, giving in to regulations dictated by the adults.’¹⁰⁹ This instead should not be misunderstood as an idealised state since Róheim’s argument is not that Aboriginals were ‘happy because they never had problems,’ rather, he is suggesting that they were far less prone to guilt.¹¹⁰ Intimidation and prohibition were very much part of the initiation processes, as we will see later, and therefore, they concerned much older children. Róheim concludes:

We have been dealing with two groups of children both belonging to the same race. The mission children go to school and although they are still in many respects real children of the desert they have undoubtedly been modified in certain respects. Out in the bush they run, wrestle, roll about and perform coitus, but I have never seen anything like the sadistic and masochistic games in which Depitarinja indulges. He has frequently been punished for the perfectly natural manifestations of his libido and these functions have thus become associated with the idea of torture and of being tortured. For the native may have an aggressive but he has not got a sadistic character. He will roar at a child or hurl a boomerang at him in a sudden fit of anger, but he will never deliberately punish him. Thus, the child in the bush will never introject a sadistic super-ego and never enjoy the game of punishing or of being punished.¹¹¹

It is the exposure to a sadistic pedagogy and the cultural repression of sexuality which modified the children’s behaviour and fostered the internalisation of a

¹⁰⁶ Róheim, *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia*, 73.

¹⁰⁷ Róheim, 73.

¹⁰⁸ Róheim, 75. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁰⁹ Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology: Culture, Personality and the Unconscious*, 73.

¹¹⁰ Morton, “‘Less Was Hidden among These Children’: Géza Róheim, Anthropology and the Politics of Aboriginal Childhood,” 18.

¹¹¹ Róheim, “Psycho-Analysis of Primitive Cultural Types,” 37.

much more violent form of prohibition. It is not that the Aboriginal children do not have a super-ego but they do not have ‘much of it.’¹¹²

Even within the terms of a theory of a less harsh super-ego, which is understood to have resulted from lenient schooling and a supportive mythological system, Róheim’s admission of the racial and gendered dimension is problematic. The fact that the cultural theory of a weaker super-ego is predicated mostly on examples from boys, whose sexuality is either fiercely punished or freely expressed, indicates that it is eventually a theory of an Aboriginal masculinity. Róheim’s different economical model has been valorised for offering a radical alternative to the European super-ego because it is never as inexorable, vicious, and as punitive, neither is it synonymous with an immoral character as Freud saw it.¹¹³ However, something about the psychoanalytic inheritance regarding female sexuality and the anthropological situatedness of Róheim, as the white man in the field, prevented him from exploring further the implications of his significant and radical contribution.

5.6 Masculinity and Sexual Difference

Though Róheim is not predominantly concerned with developing an explicit theory of male sexuality, he became struck by the observation of the Australian’s profound ‘hypermasculinity.’¹¹⁴ His anthropological observations present the sexual difference in Central Australia as similar to the European one: ‘[...] [T]he relation of the sexes to each other is very near to what we should call normal from the psycho-analytical point of view. The male is a male with emphasis, the female is happy in subordination.’¹¹⁵ He observed the strong ‘*patriarchal* tendencies’ dominating sexual life in Central Australia through several exemplifications of ‘vigorous masculinity.’¹¹⁶ For instance, he mentioned that men tended to marry much younger women, or ‘beat them into obedience.’¹¹⁷ As for the women, he

¹¹² Róheim, *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia*, 119.

¹¹³ Robinson, *The Sexual Radicals: Reich, Róheim, Marcuse*; Morton, “‘Less Was Hidden among These Children’: Géza Róheim, Anthropology and the Politics of Aboriginal Childhood”; Shaul Bar-Haim, “Revisiting the Post-Colonial Critique of Psychoanalysis: Géza Róheim and the Primitive” (Psycho-Politics: The Cross-Sections of Science and Ideology in the History of Psy-Sciences, Central European University, Budapest, 2015); Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Australia*.

¹¹⁴ Róheim, *The Riddle of the Sphinx or Human Origins*, 165.

¹¹⁵ Róheim, “Psycho-Analysis of Primitive Cultural Types,” 48.

¹¹⁶ Róheim, 40–43.

¹¹⁷ Róheim, 40–43.

regarded their role exclusively through motherhood as the ‘fundamental thing in the life of a female.’¹¹⁸ Róheim suggested that it is not the Oedipal conflict that structures the Aboriginal’s psyche, thus enabling cultural sublimation, but the separation from the mother, which in being so traumatic, demands the development of an excessive masculinity.

On the psychic level, Róheim acknowledged that the purpose of initiation rites was to mark symbolically the transition from boyhood to masculine adulthood, and thus, they played a very important role in the visualisation of the shifts occurring in the (male) Aboriginal’s unconscious psychic structures. The transition from boyhood to masculinity exposes how Róheim conceives sexual difference in terms of hunger. Boys have to be initiated, otherwise, they transform into cannibalistic creatures. Róheim writes: ‘[I]f a boy were not initiated something terrible might happen. He might become an *erinjta*, i.e. devil, fly up into the air and kill and eat all the old men of the tribe. This is what the ritual must prevent.’¹¹⁹ As previously argued, Róheim viewed these demonic figures as projections of the child’s aggression externally, which the initiation had to mitigate. Róheim believed that the way the Arrente dealt with the re-introjection of aggression was through the symbolic enactment of the separation of the boy from the mother and the physical inscription of this loss, through circumcision:

When the boy’s foreskin is cut off we see him sitting there, very sad about his loss. Immediately [...] the men tell him, ‘now you are like us, you have a *lendja* [...]’. The symbol of the protecting genius and ancestor is given to the boy after the circumcision and, at the same time, he is told what *not* to do while simultaneously he introjects (drinks) the blood of the old men [...]¹²⁰

Róheim highlights the ‘compensatory nature’ of the ritual, ‘one thing given, the other taken away,’¹²¹ which aims at a symbolic recreation of the severance of the mother-child dyad. ‘The Aranda boy, never weaned forcibly from the mother as a child, is *now separated from the mother (nipple) symbolically*.’¹²² Another ritual that is involved in the initiation rites translates the severance of this dyad into the development of an amalgamated gendered self, which Róheim calls “‘a combined

¹¹⁸ Róheim, 44.

¹¹⁹ Róheim, 72.

¹²⁰ Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology: Culture, Personality and the Unconscious*, 89.

¹²¹ Róheim, 86.

¹²² Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology: Culture, Personality and the Unconscious*, 89.

parent” imago, man and woman in one person.¹²³ The rite involves the opening of a subincision hole, which in pouring blood, mimics female menstruation and demonstrates a mutual physical wound with that of women. In many myths and songs, ‘the subincision wound is called “vagina”¹²⁴ The important point here is that Róheim describes initiation rituals as withdrawing the boy from the primordial unity with the mother by firstly symbolically severing the attachment, and secondly, by creating a feminine mark on the male body. The boy, in other words, becomes a man when he manages the separation from the mother by accepting a physical similarity to her body (for example, mimicking female menstruation).

Finally, Róheim argued that the nature of initiation rites exposed different anxieties shaping masculinity, which are not centred around castration, but the anxiety of being cannibalised. For example, Róheim writes that the castration complex in European patients is often accompanied by anxieties around the size of the genitals through which feelings ‘originate in the passive-feminine attitude toward the father, and in the castration complex.’¹²⁵ On the contrary, Aboriginal men were not afraid of castration, and instead they demonstrated what Róheim calls ‘the big penis complex.’¹²⁶ Róheim argued that competition among the Arrente took the form of qualifying which man has a smaller penis: ‘They say, “mine is quite small, but your is as big as a demon’s.”¹²⁷ The bigger the penis, the greater the fear of being captivated by the vagina: ‘They believe that women can hold fast to the penis by hooking the rim of the cervix around the glans penis.’¹²⁸

For Róheim, the theoretical context of these observations is Freud’s articulation of the phallic phase which is marked by the libidinal organisation around the boy’s genitals. For Freud, this phase effectively enabled the dissolution of the Oedipus complex. The boy’s narcissistic investment on the penis was countered either by an external voicing of a castration threat, or by the discovery of the girl’s lack of the penis.¹²⁹ As a result, the maternal sexual object is given up. For Freud, the boy’s castration anxiety is unconsciously structured upon the fantasy

¹²³ Róheim, 82.

¹²⁴ Róheim, *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia*, 250.

¹²⁵ Róheim, 251.

¹²⁶ Róheim, 251.

¹²⁷ Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology: Culture, Personality and the Unconscious*, 119.

¹²⁸ Róheim, *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia*, 250.

¹²⁹ Sigmund Freud, “The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex (1924),” in *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey, 2nd ed., vol. 7 (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

of the girl's physical inferiority. As a result, the narcissistic wound imposed by the Oedipus complex leads to the unconscious repression of the fear of turning into a woman through castration. For Freud, masculinity relates through a precarious opposition to femininity—whilst from a physical point of view masculinity is organised around genital difference, from the perspective of psychic reality the boundaries between masculinity and femininity can be easily blurred through the threat of castration. This has complications not only for the theorisation of female agency but also for the male since difference is perceived only through the binary penis, no-penis. As a result, in the male imaginary of Freudian theory, sexual difference becomes terrifying: '[T]he boy, seeing the female's lack, fears the possible loss of his own. This is the distinguishing moment between the sexes.'¹³⁰

The discrepancy between Freud and Róheim here is significant. For Róheim, the Aboriginal male fantasy about female sexuality is not the lack of the penis but the possession of a threatening vagina. The powerful female figures in mythology and the anxiety of the captivated penis manifest a form of masculinity that is established as a psychic defence against the fear of being devoured by women. Róheim maintained Freud's emphasis of sexual difference as threatening the integrity of the male body, and the penis in particular, but in the colonial context, Róheim stressed that the fear is not of castration but of engulfment. The Oedipus complex among the Arrente is managed when this threat is being managed: the boy's masculinity becomes identified with the world of men and the ancestors and is symbolically separated from the mother. Celia Brickman has noted that, for Freud, so-called primitivity is a not yet developed masculinity, a 'protomascularity': 'This is because, for psychoanalysis, femininity is a diverted masculinity whereas primitivity is a proto-masculinity.' [...] 'The primitive had not yet achieved the masculinity that the female must pronounce.'¹³¹ By declaring that despite their fear of women, or rather because of their fear of women, Aboriginal men were hypermasculine, Róheim contradicted Freud's patriarchal model of sexual difference. Nevertheless, to do so, Róheim sees the Aboriginal mother through the colonial smear of cannibalism and exposes how intricately connected is the theorisation of sexual difference with hegemonic narratives of race.

¹³⁰ Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 87.

¹³¹ Celia Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 113. Emphasis in the original.

5.7 The Ethnic Psychoanalytic Subject

The thrust of Róheim's theory of the ethnic psychoanalytic subjectivity is to acknowledge the possibility of a patriarchal cultural structure where Oedipal desires operate within the individual as they become amalgamated in a masculinity that is deprived of sadism. His contribution for the discourse of colonialism was significant. Róheim's theory suggests that Aboriginal men were more kind, generous, content, and masculine than the European ones. They have a healthy narcissism which makes them emotionally resilient, and, their super-ego protects them from destructive acts within the community whilst allowing them a fuller experience within their culture. '[E]very individual is technically a master of the whole culture, or where certain modest qualifications are necessary, of almost the whole culture. In other words, each individual is really self-reliant and grown up.'¹³² While psychoanalysts tend to emphasise the inner experiences, conflicts, and psychosexual developmental stages as determining the individual, Róheim brought forward the affirmation that culture could significantly restrict brutality. 'The central message of Róheim's work was that we have paid too high a price for civilization. The primitive despite the obvious hardships he faced, had solved the problem of communal life in a much more satisfactory manner than his civilized brother.'¹³³

Nevertheless, it is impossible to isolate his account of the Aboriginal self from the feminised and sexualised figures that threaten, define, and demarcate him. 'Why are they more masculine than others?' he asks towards the end of his fieldwork exposition only to add in the form of a footnote the question posed in a different way: 'Why are their mothers better mothers?'¹³⁴ As an outside observer, Róheim witnessed the centrality of the relation to the mother since the delayed infancy of humans radically added to the prolonged vulnerability and dependence on the mother for emotional and physical development. However, this is a maternal figure that has no agency or boundaries, just destructive desires. The mythology of cannibalistic Aboriginal mothers in Róheim's ethnography contradicts their idealised representation. Cannibalism becomes the dark side of the black mother—it is from her that the child has to separate and enter the world of non-cannibalistic adult men; it is her threatening and devouring sexuality that is reflected in the mythology of the *alkarintja*, and it is for her that cultural

¹³² Róheim, *Magic and Schizophrenia*, 51.

¹³³ Robinson, *The Sexual Radicals: Reich, Róheim, Marcuse*, 111.

¹³⁴ Róheim, 150.

advancements are being made.

‘Unconsciously, we always believe that victories can be achieved on the basis of past victories and that the world will take the mother’s place.’¹³⁵ In a sense, if we think sexual and racial difference together in Róheim’s ethnographical psychoanalysis, he seems to suggest that a healthy and less oppressive patriarchal culture depends on a racialised figure (the cannibal mother) whose role is dual: on the one hand, to ensure a content male narcissism, and on the other, to represent the physical threat that would bolster his masculinity. That is, Róheim’s ethnic psychoanalytic subject offers a novel insight into the psychological motivation of colonialism per se. ‘[C]ivilization’ he writes, ‘is a huge network of more or less successful attempts to protect mankind against the danger of object-loss, the colossal efforts made by a baby who is afraid of being left alone in the dark.’¹³⁶ There seems to be a direct link between masculinity, colonialism, and cannibalism, according to which, to manage the separation from the mother (the fear of being left alone in the dark), ‘mankind’ needs to believe in the existence of a threatening racialised female figure which sexually excites, and at the same time, prohibits any sexual wish because she is threatening, too. This is the reason why, through Róheim’s argument, the colonial unconscious is strongly informed with fantasies about cannibalistic figures, and also why Róheim’s theory depends on the racist smear of Aboriginal mothers as cannibals. In a sense, the colonial infrastructures (what Róheim calls ‘civilization’) embody the ‘more or less successful’ attempts to replenish object-loss, and, to foreclose the possibility of being left without knowing ‘in the dark.’

In this chapter, I explored a particular case in the history of psychoanalysis where psychosexual development is not formed through clinical examples of children and adults but it is produced through a psychoanalytically-informed ethnography of Australian Aboriginal subjectivity. Géza Róheim’s example constitutes an effort to theorise subjectivity from within a different cultural realm which in the European unconscious was both racialised and feminised. As argued, the purpose of Róheim’s anthropological expedition was to affirm the universality of the incestuous impulses towards the mother as manifesting in the Oedipus complex. However, in Australia, Róheim plunged into the colonial myth of cannibalistic Aboriginal mothers. Contrary to the colonial administration

¹³⁵ Róheim, *Magic and Schizophrenia*, 83.

¹³⁶ Géza Róheim, *The Origin and Function of Culture* (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc, 1971), 131.

that demonised these women to abduct their children, Róheim, in accordance with the wider psychoanalytic framework of norms, did not consider their alleged cannibalism unnatural. Instead, he regarded it as a symptom of a mother's failure to separate from her child, linked to the absence of a weaning period (Róheim argued that the children weaned themselves). Drawing on the colonial imagery of the cannibal trope Róheim argued that Aboriginal mothers were not unambivalently good—they are aggressive and threatening for their children too. But, Aboriginal culture was fashioned in such a way so as to enable children to manage the separation from their mother (characteristically, Róheim is not concerned about how the mother manages the separation from her child) to survive the threatening adult world and grow into considerably happier, less sadistic and repressed, and more masculine individuals. In my discussion of Róheim's account of the role of myths, rituals, and the Aboriginal cultural regime in general, I have stressed that the ethnic unconscious that Róheim's psychoanalysis offers is directly informed by social structures. Therefore, contrary to the psychoanalytic subject that Freud left us with—plagued by a memory of paternal cannibalism, compelled to violently incorporate those whom he envies—Róheim's psychoanalytic ethnic subject is structured around fears of being devoured, and is nursed by a mother that is as aggressive as much as she is fulfilling.

Nevertheless, while Róheim's ethnic unconscious has been regarded as a humanising perspective towards the Australian Aboriginals, his profound blindness and neglect towards the colonial living conditions of extreme deprivation and humiliation fail to open a dialogue about the impact of colonisation on individual psychology. Instead, I have argued that, in ascribing psychological validity to the idea of cannibalistic impulses of the Aboriginal mothers, Róheim's ethnographically-informed psychoanalytic theory becomes complicit in the perpetuation of a colonial mentality about the fearful feminised other. While he proclaimed that in Australian culture 'the whole culture is built on the repression of the woman,'¹³⁷ he ignored the irony in his own statement by neglecting the manner in which his theory does the same to the woman of colour. Róheim's ethnic psychoanalytic subject is dependent on the colonial grammar of the cannibal trope to establish sexual difference between aboriginal men and women through a racial formulation. The cannibal trope becomes consolidated as a practice of black motherhood because of her hunger and desire, suppressing once and for all her possibility for having a voice, a consciousness and a desire

¹³⁷ Róheim, *The Riddle of the Sphinx or Human Origins*, 165.

that, in the white imaginary, is not perceived as threatening, idealised and sexualised.

Overall, although Róheim's project expanded the psychoanalytic horizon to cultural difference, and made a case for the ethnic unconscious, his contribution to the decolonisation of psychoanalysis from the colonial smear of the cannibal trope remains limited. This is because the cannibal trope becomes attached to the body of the black female colonised subject. Róheim's idealisation of the Australian Aboriginal is a politically intriguing statement, especially when juxtaposed to the atrocities of the Second World War: a culture where cannibalism was allegedly on the table, is one in which aggression is more contained and sadism is absent. But, I have argued that it also translates into a culture where cannibalism was allegedly a feminine trait, that is, the one in which masculinity is less sadistic. Without a critical attitude towards colonial dehumanisation, however, Róheim not only silences Aboriginal women but also nails the association between motherhood, blackness, trauma, and death, which as we will see in the Chapter Seven widely incorporated in the post-Freudian tradition. But before that, it is key to explore a major decolonising voice for psychoanalysis who wrote from a non-European context as well, and critiqued psychoanalysis from a non-psychoanalytic angle: the psychiatrist Frantz Fanon.

CHAPTER SIX

The Return of the Repressed: Frantz Fanon and the Post-Colonial Unconscious

6.1 Fanon, Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis

While Géza Róheim theorises the ethnic psychoanalytic subject by focusing on cultural difference and ignoring the impact of colonial oppression, Frantz Fanon dealt explicitly with how the domination of the colonial culture over the indigenous dramatically shapes unconscious life. Fanon employs a scathing and poetic form of writing to expose the oppressed psychology of the colonised, whose claims to an individual identity, wholeness and integrity are radically undermined. Fanon was born in Martinique in 1925, studied medicine and psychiatry in Lyon and between 1952 and his death in 1961, worked in psychiatric clinics in France and France's then colonies Algeria and Tunisia. His experience from the psychiatric settings radicalised his thinking towards the view that madness was not a biological predisposition, an innate, psychological defect, but an effect of colonial power. Fanon's work emphasises the interconnectedness of psychic and emotional development with social oppression. What is more, the psychiatric establishments and institutionalisation of madness that Fanon experienced as a psychiatrist in Northern Africa enforced his life-long anti-colonial commitment and his view that only by social change and decolonisation could people of colour entertain a conflict-free psychic life. His commitment to anti-colonial struggles becomes apparent in the politics that accompany his psychiatric practices. He joined the Front Liberation Nationale (FLN) a militant party fighting for the national liberation of Algeria against the French government, and even when banned from the country, he moved to Tunisia and participated in the dissemination of resources and the organisation of resistance against the French colonial forces among North African countries. For his political activism, Fanon's life had been targeted by French secret services; several, unsuccessful assassination attempts against him were organised.¹ Whilst he was ill with leukaemia and had to be transferred to the United States for treatment, he was captured and interrogated in the United States by the CIA, before being offered any medical support.

¹ Lewis R. Gordon, *What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought* (London: Fordham University Press, 2015), 95.

In her essay, *To Cure and to Free*, Françoise Vergès places Fanon against the Western psychiatric establishment, which persistently associated psychic pathology with cultural and racial difference. Colonial psychiatry, Vergès shows, effectively competed with ‘the other components of the colonial discourse, because it advocated a progressive assimilation through seduction, rather than a subjugation by force.’² Colonial psychiatrists and psychiatric diagnosis aimed at luring the native’s soul into assimilating the European mentality—anything that did not comply with a white colonial mentality was doomed pathological, and there was little if any space accounting for cultural and racial difference. As Vergès shows, Fanon was at odds with this tradition: ‘he believed that psychiatry could become an emancipatory therapy, a means among other means of political and social emancipation, that its institutions could offer to disturbed persons a site in which to learn to be free again.’³

In their ‘long overdue’ and extensive examination of Fanon’s psychiatric writings, *Decolonising Madness*, Neil Gibson and Roberto Beneduce have exposed the incongruities Fanon was experiencing in his role as a Western-trained medical doctor.⁴ Gibson and Beneduce argue that his transformative psychiatric practice and clinical writings, alongside his political action, were recourses stemming from Fanon’s discomfort with Western modes of psychological education and training.⁵ In a way, Fanon was seeking ‘an epistemological and clinical approach’ that was a ‘critical, self-questioning discipline that rejected the thesis of innate racial difference and the pitfalls of ingenuous cultural relativism.’⁶ For this reason, Fanon’s psychiatric practice and his ambivalent relationship to conventional symptom reading and diagnosis, tends to obscure his place in the psychiatric establishment. In fact, Lewis Gordon stressed that the uneasiness with Fanon’s transformative politics in the conventional psychiatric world, becomes apparent in the tendency to conceal his capacity as a psychiatrist, and substitute it with the one of a cultural and political theorist.⁷ Gordon sustains this point quoting Jacques Postel, Fanon’s friend and colleague from Lyon’s medical school: ‘when our colleague Frantz Fanon died, psychiatric journals remained silent... The Fanon story was so outrageous that the psychiatrists sought to repress it

⁴ Nigel C. Gibson and Roberto Beneduce, *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* (London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2017).

⁵ Gibson and Beneduce, 21.

⁶ Gibson and Beneduce, 112.

⁷ Lewis R. Gordon, *What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought* (London: Fordham University Press, 2015), 103.

altogether, so that people eventually forgot that Fanon was a psychiatrist.⁸

Fanon's ambivalence to mainstream psychiatry is of particular relevance here. Like Róheim who was situated in-between psychoanalysis and anthropology, Fanon's psychiatric training grants him a position of tension to psychoanalysis. Fanon never received any psychoanalytic training, nor underwent psychoanalysis himself, but he maintained a sceptical interest in psychoanalytic thinking, which is one of the thorny issues among his critics and supporters.⁹ Firstly, Fanon drew on both Freud and Lacan, as well as Jung, Adler, Mannoni and Sartre. However, he did so in a fragmented and not fully worked through way. In secondary literature, Homi Bhabha's work stands out as one of the first instances linking Fanon to Lacanian psychoanalysis. Bhabha used Fanon's work, alongside Lacan's, to theorise a post-colonial subjectivity that would not be founded upon coherence and integrity, but on ambivalence, mimicry, and alienation. In his 1987 essay *What does a black man want*, Bhabha stressed the convergence between Lacan and Fanon in the context of how difference and otherness are inherently embedded within every subject, through the language of desire.¹⁰ Bhabha argued that every identification, every process of acquiring a sense of self, effectively passes through the 'differentiating force of the Other' 'the process of the subject's signification in language and society's objectification in Law'—in other words, desire ('what the black man wants') is not differentiable from particular historical moments and thus colonial structures.¹¹

Despite Bhabha's powerful articulation of post-colonial subjectivity, critics have argued, Bhabha overlooked Fanon's inherently ambivalent relationship to Lacanian, and non-Lacanian, psychoanalysis. For example, Mrinalini Greedharry has pointed out that Bhabha actually misses the fundamental incompatibility between Fanon's thought and psychoanalysis, which becomes apparent in Fanon's 'eclectic' use of psychoanalysis.¹² Greedharry emphasises that although for Fanon psychoanalysis comes in the service of his project, it exposes

⁸ Gordon, 103.

⁹ For a detailed account of Fanon's clinical practice and his use of psychology as a pedagogy see: Erica Burman, "Fanon, Foucault, Feminisms: Psychoeducation, Theoretical Psychology, and Political Change," *Theory & Psychology* 26, no. 6 (2016): 706–30. For Fanon's misrecognition as a psychoanalyst see: Gibson and Beneduce, *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics*, 3–5.

¹⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, "What Does the Black Man Want?," *New Formations* 1 (1987): 118–24.

¹¹ Bhabha, 121.

¹² Mrinalini Greedharry, *Postcolonial Theory and Psychoanalysis: From Uneasy Engagements to Effective Critique* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 16.

its limitations as a discourse incapable of grasping the psychological experience of black men, precisely because of an innate, undertheorized experience; that of the colonised subject.¹³ Like Greedharry, Derek Hook and Ross Truscott regard Fanon's relation to psychoanalysis as 'strategic,' in the sense that Fanon does not only call for an uncritical application of psychoanalytic concepts in the context of the colonized, effecting a fundamental misapprehension of the colonial psychology—like Róheim's initial motivation to find the Oedipus complex in the Australian tribes. Rather, Fanon puts forward the need for a critical interrogation of the very structures, past and imagery of psychoanalysis, making possible a reading that 'foregrounds the coloniality and/or racism of psychoanalytic thinking itself.'¹⁴

Another issue that is raised regarding Fanon's complex and ambivalent relation to psychoanalysis is the question of authority, namely who can talk, write and argue psychoanalytically. Fanon's lack of psychoanalytic training confined him to the position of an underdog in relation to the European psychoanalytic institutes. Fanon was not only not psychoanalytically trained, but also a political revolutionary, a member of anti-colonial movements and a supporter of the Algerian armed struggle. So, given that Fanon was not a psychoanalyst, and he maintained an ambivalent relation to the discipline, why turn to him here? His biographer, David Macey described his work as a 'bricolage,'¹⁵ an amalgamation of concepts and structures from European epistemologies that weaved together through Fanon's poetic and radical voice, engendered new cross-disciplinary formulations that ruptured the rigid boundaries and revealed untheorized gaps in psychoanalysis. It is voicing his critique from the position of marginality that bolstered his insights on the psychology of racism. Fanon's exteriority to psychoanalysis offers critically examined and evaluated psychoanalytic applications in the context of colonial Algeria. In his earliest work *Black Skin, White Masks*, he outlined the project as follows: 'one should investigate the extent to which the conclusions of Freud or of Adler can be applied to the effort to understand the man of color's view of the world.'¹⁶ Fanon, unlike Róheim, did not focus on how cultural difference can produce alternative forms of psychoanalytic subjectivity. Grounding his critique on the constructed

¹³ Greedharry, 16.

¹⁴ Derek Hook and Ross Truscott, "Fanonian Ambivalence: On Psychoanalysis and Postcolonial Critique," *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* 33, no. 3 (2013): 157.

¹⁵ David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Verso, n.d.), 160–61.

¹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 2nd ed. (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 141.

irreducibility of racial difference, Fanon examined how psychoanalysis accounts for the phenomenological difference of the black and the white subject, which is inscribed on the body and is plain on the skin. In this sense, Fanon's starting point in interrogating psychoanalysis becomes the very surface of the body and how this is recognised, seen, denied, used and objectified, submitted in the field of vision.

What separates Fanon from the previous psychoanalytic thinkers that I have explored is his emphasis on the body as a threshold surface, as both a sexual and a racialised entity, which as one commentator put it in Fanon becomes a 'site of incessant material negotiations between the external world [...] and the internal world of the psyche.'¹⁷ The in-between position of the skin, which both protects and separates the external world from the internal as a shell and is the site where racial difference is marked is Fanon's contribution to the investigation of colonial subjectivity. According to this logic, how does Fanon deal with the cannibal trope, as the fantasy of racial difference in the white imaginary? How is the racist fear of otherness as devouring viewed from the perspective of the colonial subject?

To address these questions, I explore the inherited narratives featuring the cannibal trope from an anti-colonial perspective. Apart from its traces in psychoanalytic representation, cannibalism was a critical weapon in the aesthetic arsenal of anti-colonial modernist and avant-garde movements in Brazil and the Caribbean. In the first section of the chapter I trace the role cannibalism is called to play in the short-lived Brazilian avant-garde movement *Anthropophagia* and the poetry of Fanon's school teacher Aimé Césaire. In these cultural texts, the self-representation of the colonised as a 'cannibal' fabricated a post-colonial identity that aimed to destabilise and threaten the hegemonic Eurocentrism. By comparing and contrasting the two artistic uses of the cannibal trope, I discuss the intricacies of colonial dehumanisation that allowed or refrained the colonised to appropriate this polemical, anti-colonial form of identification.

Secondly, I move on to discuss how cannibalism was deployed in the psychology of colonialism, and especially in the formulation of colonial desires as annihilating the oppressed other. But for Fanon, it is impossible to grasp desire without looking at the role of the body; since desire is always embodied. Both

¹⁷ Teresa de Lauretis, "Difference Embodied: Reflections on Black Skin, White Masks," *Parallax* 8, no. 2 (2002): 57.

the subject and the object of desire are formulated in racial and sexual terms. Lastly, I consider how Fanon looks at racism by focusing on how cannibalistic imagery has accompanied people of colour through the psychoanalytic concept of phobia (or as a form of an inverted desire). The fear of the black man, Fanon believed, exposes that which cannot be articulated or expressed in the white, orthodox Oedipal structure: latent male and female homosexuality. Therefore, Fanon links racism with homophobia arguing that the reason why black men were systematically regarded as practicing cannibalism is because the whole infrastructure of colonialism has been unconsciously motivated by an unexpressed, concealed homosexuality. Fanon's argument situates the cannibal trope entirely in the white unconscious. Nevertheless, while Fanon created a dialogue between psychoanalysis and race to deconstruct the colonial unconscious, his own reductive reading of racism as closeted homosexuality marks some untheorized gaps for the post-colonial unconscious.

‘I give you my quick words
consume and wrap
and as you wrap kiss me with a violent trembling
kiss me until I am the furious WE
kiss, kiss US
but also bite
bite to draw blood from our blood!’
Aimé Césaire, The Return to the Native Land

‘Cannibalism alone unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically.’
Oswald de Andrade, *Cannibalist Manifesto*

6.2 Uncanny Cannibals in Brazil and the Antilles

Brazilian avant-garde art offers a great example of how the colonial objectification of indigenous representation has been re-appropriated through aesthetics. More precisely, Brazilian avant-gardists reclaimed the European trope of cannibalism to rewrite colonial subjectivity for anti-colonial purposes. In May 1928, a group of avant-garde writers and artists in São Paulo founded a short-lived journal called *Revista de Anthropophagia (Review of Anthropophagy)*, calling for aesthetic projects to reconstruct Brazilian identity from the perspective of reclaiming the colonial myth of Brazilian cannibalism. Since the 1922 Week of Modern Art at São Paulo, which marked the emergence of modernism in Latin America, Brazilian artists had experimented with ideas of excavating and recovering histories of Brazil’s earliest, pre-colonial inhabitants to tackle the advances of European reason and modernity. The movement dissolved during the 1929 financial crisis because of a wider political shift to the right, but before its decline, it exposed important questions about cultural origins, authenticity and national identification. A pioneer member of the *anthropophagia* movement, was a ‘white,’ bourgeois¹⁸ artist named Oswald de Andrade. In his famous

¹⁸ There is little information regarding Oswald de Andrade’s ethnic background, and available images of him do not provide enough clarity so as to confirm with certainty his whiteness. However, local texts indicate that he was born in a wealthy family and was sent to Europe to study between the ages of 22 to 27. Given Brazil’s socio-political context in the 1920s, these class indications point to the same direction. Therefore, I consider Oswald de Andrade as ‘white’ not in the strict terms of skin colour necessarily, but in terms of whiteness as performativity. And I have to thank my friend, Aline Souza-Martins and PhD candidate in Clinical Psychology at the University of São Paulo for her help and insights on this matter.

Manifesto Anthropófago published in the first—and last—issue of the *Revista de Anthropophagia*, he deployed the form of cannibalism as a synthesis of the colonial dialectic which was solidified in the mutually exclusive figures of the civilised and the primitive. In her extensive investigation of Brazil's colonial history and culture, Darlene Sadlier translates Andrade's project as an invitation to 'ingest European influences insofar as they could be regurgitated in the form of something new and Brazilian for export.'¹⁹

Andrade understood the oppression of the native as the mere possibility for the perpetuation of colonial power, and thus what he put forward in his manifesto was that the power of the Brazilian *anthropophagus* relied on the fact that primitivity, savagery and cannibalism were the condition for the emergence of the universality of European subjectivity. To this, he juxtaposed an anti-colonial resistance: 'We want the Carib Revolution. Greater than the French Revolution. The unification of all productive revolts for the progress of humanity. Without us, Europe wouldn't even have its meagre declaration of the rights of man.'²⁰

However, the *Manifesto* is also a lament, since it exposes the penetrating capacity of colonisation as having destroyed every possibility for return to a pre-colonial past. Andrade seemed to be aware of the intricacies of such a return. In an exemplar of regurgitation of the highest cultural advances of European culture, he wonders: 'Tupi or not Tupi that is the question.'²¹ The Tupi was a short name for the Tupinambá, a tribe living near Rio de Janeiro allied to the French. The Tupiniquim, on the other hand, inhabited in the area of São Paulo, and aided the Portuguese—as Sadlier explains, they were the pre-colonial tribes living in Brazilian ground. The tribes became famous through a German named Hans Staden who was captured by the Tupinambá tribe. Although Staden was released safe and sound, he produced a graphic narrative about how the Tupinambá consume their enemy prisoners, after dismembering them, which had 'the greatest impact of any of its time.'²² Sadlier points out the irony in one of Staden's chapter titled '*How the Tupinambá Treat their Prisoners upon their Return*' accompanied with woodcuts of mutilations and anthropophagy.²³ In his

¹⁹ Sadlier, *Brazil Imagined: From 1500 to the Present*, 190.

²⁰ Oswald de Andrade, "Canibalist Manifesto," trans. Leslie Bary, *Latin American Literary Review* 19, no. 38 (1991): 39.

²¹ Andrade, 38.

²² Sadlier, *Brazil Imagined: From 1500 to the Present*, 26.

²³ Sadlier, 24.

book *Cannibal Modernities* Luís Madureira argued that Andrade and his circle were working through the melancholic impossibility of returning to a Brazilian pre-colonial history: given that Portuguese colonialists had destroyed most of the Tupi's cultural artefacts, they also symbolised the 'tragically unavailable [...] "native informants"'²⁴ Andrade saw the reclamation of cannibalism as a defence against the melancholic realisation of the inevitability of European colonialism—which meant that even the dilemma of deploying the histories and cultures of the Tupi would essentially have to be articulated through a European symbolic structure.

But Shakespeare was not the only reference in Andrade's *Manifesto Anthropófago*—he deployed an arsenal of European references, from Hegel, to Rousseau, to Marx, and to Freud, among others. Finding common ground in cannibalism, the movement captured on the one hand the sweeping force of colonialism which allows no space for otherness, and on the other, appropriated Brazil's dominant representation in the European imagery. For critics regarding the movement with scepticism, the cannibal trope was nothing but a meaningless analogy that reduced Brazilian culture into a 'mirror culture,' making absolutely no contribution to the reinvention of Brazilian identity.²⁵ Schwarz' s critique helps us expose this crucial point about the movement of *Anthropofagia*. In reclaiming cannibalism, Andrade exposed that there is nothing essentialist in this form of identity—it is premised on a non-solid ground, it is arbitrarily sustained and separates essence or material existence from representation. Andrade, in fact, went as far as claiming that departing from the ground of cannibalism, one can 'eat away' modernity's rigid and incompatible binaries, like the civilised and the cannibal, but one can do so even on the level of the unconscious.

The Struggle between what we might call the Uncreated and the Creation—illustrated by the permanent contradiction between Man and his Taboo. Everyday love and the capitalist way of life. Cannibalism. Absorption of the sacred enemy. To transform him into a totem.²⁶

Andrade was referring to Freud's work *Totem and Taboo* published the previous decade, in which (as we have seen) Freud discussed the transition

²⁴ Luís Madureira, *Cannibal Modernities: Postcoloniality and the Avant-Garde in Caribbean and Brazilian Literature* (U.S.A: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 13.

²⁵ Roberto Schwarz, "Brazilian Culture: Nationalism by Elimination," trans. Linda Briggs, *New Left Review* I, no. 167 (1988): 82.

²⁶ Andrade, "Canibalist Manifesto," 43.

from totemism—an externally projected conglomeration of paternal power—to taboo—the unconscious internalisation of prohibition. Therefore, what Andrade proposed was the reversal of this internalisation: to project paternal power externally, to re-signify (Portuguese) patriarchy.

There is no need to enter into further detail about the *Manifesto* here, it suffices to recall Madureira's comment about how 'the future *Anthropofagia* sets out to contrast adheres in large measure to the familiar contours of western discourses of emancipation.'²⁷ In a way, one could read the poem as building bridges with other oppressed groups establishing a common language and network for decolonisation. Overall, Andrade's manifesto is an early instance of post-colonial criticism along the lines of what Paul Gilroy suggested in his book *Black Atlantic*: a criticism premised upon the reversal between the periphery and the centre, as a form of shifting the hegemony of European, modern thought and culture from within its margins.²⁸

Without understanding the distinct use of the cannibal trope in the context of anti-colonial struggles and aesthetics, it is difficult to appreciate Fanon's contribution to the decolonisation of psychoanalytic imagery. His transformative approach to the role of the body, and the skin, as the locus where race is being played out cannot be fully grasped without understanding what cannibalism meant in Antillean poetry. For example, when Andrade invokes the imagery of the colonised as being 'cannibalised' by the coloniser, he speaks from the position of a white, bourgeois artist. The same does not hold true for the Antillean poet Aimé Césaire, who exposes a fundamental difference on how anti-colonial critique is voiced, and what aesthetic tools and tropes can become available from the perspective of a black man. Césaire was a very prominent Antillean poet, theorist and politician, and before the Second World War, Fanon's school teacher at the Lycée Schoelcher in Fort-de-France. Césaire had studied English literature in the École Normale Supérieure in Paris and returned to Martinique in 1939. In fact, Fanon recalls that Césaire's return to Martinique brought along the possibility of blackness as proclamation, which until then could only be understood as a naturalised state of being. As Fanon notes in his essay *West Indians and Africans* (1955)

²⁷ Madureira, *Cannibal Modernities: Postcoloniality and the Avant-Garde in Caribbean and Brazilian Literature*, 13.

²⁸ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).

For the first time, a *lycée* teacher—a man, therefore, who was apparently worthy of respect—was seen to announce quite simply to West Indian society “that it is fine and good to be a Negro”. To be sure, this created a scandal. [...] Two centuries of white truth proved this man wrong. He must be mad, for it was unthinkable he could be right.²⁹

Whilst in Paris, Césaire composed his first poem titled *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, which became a key text for the movement of Negritude—a cultural, aesthetic, socio-political and transcontinental movement which voiced the intricacies of the experience of being colonised, alongside the political and personal complexities. In the poem, one of the startling observations Césaire makes, upon his return to the native land, is the alienated landscape of Martinique, the zombifying everyday life and the severed social bonds between the island’s inhabitants. ‘In this disowning town, this strange crowd which does not gather, does not mingle: this crowd that can so easily disengage itself, make off, slip away. This crowd which doesn’t know how to crowd.’³⁰

In his thorough examination of Césaire’s contributions to the politics and contradictions of decolonisation, Gary Wilder portrays Césaire as a figure with a ‘pragmatic relationship to colonial emancipation and political freedom.’³¹ Wilder argues that we should think of Césaire’s politics of decolonisation as humble and modest: neither as a set of utopian and romantic promises about what post-colonial freedom would carry along, nor as a means of doctrines and ‘ready-made a priori certainties’ that fetishized political means.³² Instead, Césaire requires us to think decolonisation through a set of realistic possibilities, which could be actualised and executed through a combination of means, within the present conditions.³³ This non-utopian, non-conservative, and non-ideological approach to Antillean politics entailed also a perceptive and insightful gaze at what challenges and obstacles the colonial infrastructure enforced. Keeping this in mind, we examine his poetry alongside similar lines. This is not to suggest, however, that his poetry should be read through a crude realism or as

²⁹ Frantz Fanon, “West Indians and Africans,” in *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 21. Emphasis in the original.

³⁰ Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, trans. Mireille Rosello and Annie Pritchard (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1995), 75.

³¹ Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization and the Future of the World* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 21.

³² Wilder, 21.

³³ Wilder, 21.

a concrete, militant or politicised form of art. Quite the contrary. It is a form of aesthetic pluralism, which according to Césaire's biographer, Gregson Davis, must be conceived as an undogmatic 'drama of self-exploration in which the speaker typically *impersonates* differing versions of the self and holds them up to merciless scrutiny.'³⁴ Césaire withdraws himself and allows his voice to be multiplied and interpolated by a plethora of racial selves, 'masks of negritude'³⁵— as Gregson puts it, implying the ways Césaire's work anticipated Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*.³⁶ Similar to Fanon, as we will shortly see, Césaire speaks from the position of racialised subjects that have historically functioned as 'universal scapegoat[s]':³⁷ 'as there are hyena men and panther-men, I would be a Jew-man/a Kaffir-man/ a Hindu-man-from Calcutta, /a Harlem-man-who-does-not-vote [...]'.³⁸ Césaire, Wilder cautions us, does not aim at multiplying the representation of black subjectivity, but in rehearsing different perspectives, to explore the boundaries and the 'impossible dilemmas concerning colonial racism, alienation, and emancipation.'³⁹

While as I indicated earlier, Madureira suggested that the movements of *Anthropofagia* and *Negritude* in their deployment of the cannibal trope expose their convergence in the wider project of 'provincializing the west' by attempting not only 'to reveal, but more crucially, to undo' the process of the native's erasure,⁴⁰ a closer juxtaposition shows otherwise. For Andrade the appropriation of cannibalism is the key to social cohesion ('cannibalism alone unites us'), whereas for Césaire the crowd that doesn't know how to crowd remains as an unresolved, troubling question. Andrade claims cannibalism as a militant appropriation in the sphere of language and imagination—like reclaiming Shakespearean quotes. Césaire's poem is less calculated, rarely involving political injunctions but unravelling the psychological arena of anti-colonial hatred and how it affects

³⁴ Gregson Davis, *Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27.

³⁵ Davis, 27.

³⁶ A very beautiful and indicative passage is the following: 'My mouth will be the mouth of those griefs which have no mouth, my voice, the freedom of those that collapse in the dungeon of despair [...] And above all beware, my body and my soul too, beware of crossing your arms in the sterile attitude of the spectator, because life is not a spectacle, because a sea of sorrows is not a proscenium, because a man who screams is not a dancing bear.' Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, 89.

³⁷ Davis, *Aimé Césaire*, 27.

³⁸ Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, 85.

³⁹ Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization and the Future of the World*, 22.

⁴⁰ Madureira, *Cannibal Modernities: Postcoloniality and the Avant-Garde in Caribbean and Brazilian Literature*, 215.

the responses of people of colour: ‘Because we hate you, you and/your reason, we claim kinship with/dementia praecox with flaming madness/with tenacious cannibalism.’⁴¹ Reclaiming madness and cannibalism is presented as a form of resistance, but unlike Andrade, not exclusively. Césaire’s poem makes a different contribution to the movement of negritude; departing from the lived experience of immigration, exile and return, and through its unfinished form, the poem contemplates the fundamental openness and unfinished process of returning.⁴² Perhaps this view is best echoed in Davis when he describes Césaire’s homecoming as ‘a recurrent event that is continually in the process of rehearsal,’⁴³ which effectively highlights the inherent plasticity of *Negritude*. But also, in a profound similitude with contemporary critical theory and philosophy, the reading of Césaire’s poem which I am suggesting here, sits well with a psychoanalytically-informed understanding of ‘giving an account of one’s self’—echoing the title of Judith Butler’s work—which is based on the lived experience of the impossibility of identity and the centrality of alienation. As Butler put it: ‘In the making of the story, I create myself in new form, instituting a narrative “I” that is superadded to the “I” whose past life I seek to tell. [...] My account of myself is partial, haunted by that for which I can devise no definitive story.’⁴⁴

The difference between the way Andrade and Césaire use the cannibal trope lies precisely in what Butler calls *that for which no story can be written about*, unless it is about how it haunts accounts of one’s self; in psychoanalytic terms, the unconscious. Andrade argues for the necessity to reclaim cannibalism as a form of colonial otherness to produce a new copy of peripheral primitivism. This is what Bhabha described as when ‘the observer becomes observed’ a process which ‘the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined,’⁴⁵ which makes mimicry a disturbing and even threatening means in the anti-colonial arsenal. Mimicry here must be understood not as a process of simply imitating the colonizer’s manners, habits and intellectual knowledge; but as an active reciprocation of the colonial gaze that places mimicry closer to

⁴¹ Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, 93.

⁴² What better example of this repetition of Césaire’s self-narrative than the ‘four separate published versions of the poem,’ which demonstrate, as Davis put it ‘a long-term engagement in revision that testifies to his creative obsession.’ Davis, *Aimé Césaire*, 21.

⁴³ Davis, 22.

⁴⁴ Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 40. I must thank my friend and colleague Aline Souza-Martins who pointed out to me this text and with her insightful comments informed my understanding of it.

⁴⁵ Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” 129.

mockery. More precisely, '[I]n order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.'⁴⁶ By copying the colonizer's capacity for representation, Andrade's manifesto can challenge its 'power to be a model';⁴⁷ therefore, his suggestion for an anti-colonial aesthetic does not result in the consolidation of European epistemologies 'but rather in their displacement.'⁴⁸ turning the discourse of savage exoticism on its face. This is because mimicry works as a 'metonymy of presence.'⁴⁹ Mimicry reproduces the colonizer's ethos, values, aesthetics, or style and through this mimicking act the colonizing power is partially there, perhaps in the form of an optical illusion or a bad copy: '*almost the same, but not quite.*'⁵⁰ This is precisely the radical excess produced by Andrade's use of the cannibal trope: the avant-garde cannibal is an emancipatory and empowering solution because s/he is not the same as the cannibal produced by the colonial discourse. Andrade's proposition to reclaim savagery and cannibalism raised the question of *who* can legitimately speak about the subaltern as anthropophagic, therefore challenging 'the *authorization* of colonial representations';⁵¹ namely, who has the right to produce cannibals and what kind of cannibals are these? To paraphrase Bhabha this is the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be able to be cannibalized (that is play the role imposed by the colonial gaze), is *emphatically* not to be a cannibal.⁵²

Césaire's use of the cannibal trope, on the other hand, can only be used to explain, or diagnose the profound alienation he comes across whilst returning to his homeland. There is no place from where to counter what he calls 'this ancient dream of my cannibal cruelties.'⁵³ For Césaire the essence of racism is that it completely shoehorns the black subject into a position of an allegedly deserved dispossession: 'to be a good nigger he must believe honestly in his unworthiness and never feel any perverse curiosity to check those fateful hieroglyphics.'⁵⁴ It is the impossibility of developing a space from where to counter colonial power that

⁴⁶ Bhabha, 126.

⁴⁷ Bhabha, 128.

⁴⁸ Madureira, *Cannibal Modernities: Postcoloniality and the Avant-Garde in Caribbean and Brazilian Literature*, 41.

⁴⁹ Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," 126.

⁵⁰ Bhabha, 126.

⁵¹ Bhabha, 131.

⁵² The original phrase goes like this: 'to be Anglicized, is *emphatically* not to be English.' Bhabha, 128.

⁵³ Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, 70.

⁵⁴ Césaire, 87.

differentiates Césaire and Andrade, and additionally, a psychic space that is not infected with colonial hatred. It is the same ‘impossibility’ that Fanon borrows from Césaire’s poetry and incorporates into his own work. In *West Indians and Africans*, Fanon wrote about the *Notebook*: ‘Until 1939 the West Indian lived, thought, dreamed (we have shown this in *Black Skin, White Masks*), composed poems, wrote novels exactly as a white man would have done. We understand now why it was not possible for him, as for the African poets, to sing the black night, “The black woman with pink heels.” Before Césaire, West Indian literature was a literature of Europeans. The West Indian identified himself with the white man, adopted a white man’s attitude “was a white man.”’⁵⁵

6.3 Colonial Desires

It is in the context of his effort to trace the impact of colonialism in the psychology and the unconscious of the colonised, that Fanon writes his 1952 book *Black Skin, White Masks*, originally submitted as his medical doctorate dissertation. In this book Fanon draws on phenomenology, existentialism and psychoanalysis to explore the psychic structures of colonialism and argues that it is the blindness towards or the impossibility of recognition of the black individual’s humanness that colonialism is founded upon.⁵⁶ The colonial native subject is a sub-product of the colonial condition that is constructed both through reason and fantasy, as deprived of a separate agency, as an object: it is not only the black body, but the psyche that has been colonised. As Fanon put it ‘what is often called the black soul is a white man’s artefact.’⁵⁷ This statement made early on in his work echoes a rather pessimistic entry point into the domain of colonial psychology, which, however, I argue Fanon made strategically—to separate entirely the white man’s desire, and how his desire has shadowed and foreclosed any possibility for the black man’s desire. ‘What does a black man want?’ Fanon asks, ‘at the risk of arousing the resentment of my colored brothers, I will say that the black is not a man.’⁵⁸ While his wider tactic is to document, identify, and illuminate the psychology of the black man under colonialism, starting from the point of non-existence (‘not a man’) leads Fanon into devising a position of speaking from the margins: a position that assumes that the representation of blackness in Western

⁵⁵ Fanon, “West Indians and Africans,” 26.

⁵⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, 2nd ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

⁵⁷ Fanon, 16.

⁵⁸ Fanon, 10.

literature is a white man's artefact.

Fanon dedicates a whole chapter, titled *The So-Called Dependency Complex of the Colonized Peoples*, to closely examine the argument of a Lacanian psychoanalyst and ethnographer, Octave Mannoni who having lived in the French colony, Madagascar, published in 1950 one of the first works about the psychology of colonialism, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonisation*.⁵⁹ Mannoni was among the first psychoanalysts to tackle issues of discrimination in the colonial societies, but he did so by considering the role of racialisation as irrelevant. 'France is unquestionably one of the least racist-minded countries in the world; also, colonial policy is officially anti-racist.'⁶⁰ In significant contrast to Mannoni, Fanon situated race not only at the centre of political and economic relations, but psychic too: 'what M. Mannoni has forgotten is that the Malagasy alone no longer exists; he has forgotten that the Malagasy exists *with the European*. The arrival of the white man in Madagascar shattered not only its horizons but its psychological mechanisms.'⁶¹ In response to Mannoni's approach Fanon implied that in the aftermath of the colonial invasion the Malagasy becomes aware of his 'Malagasyhood' and is shoehorned into a position which the discriminatory white coloniser pushes him towards: 'I begin to suffer from not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination on me, makes me a colonised native, robs me of all my worth, all individuality, tells me that I am a parasite on the world, that I must bring myself as quickly as possible into step with the white world.'⁶²

Nonetheless, Mannoni wrote about colonialism by exploring the psychic affect and the unconscious desires that underpin the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, by deploying a Shakespearian dyad and framing it in terms of complementary psychological structures that forms a foreclosed system: 'dependency and inferiority form an alternative; the one excludes the other.'⁶³ Mannoni's dyad consisted of an insecure, fragile figure, keen on dominating and imposing himself on others, and a dependent and submissive other, who requires guidance and governance. He therefore indirectly implied that there

⁵⁹ Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. Pamela Powesland (London: Methuen & Co, Ltd, 1956).

⁶⁰ Mannoni, 110.

⁶¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 2008, 97.

⁶² Fanon, 98.

⁶³ Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, 40.

must be some unconscious desire that grants consensus to the coloniser for the imposition of colonial power and oppression—otherwise this schema would collapse. David Macey pointed out, quite provocatively, that ‘by the same logic, it can always be proved that the rape-victim was essentially consenting.’⁶⁴ Macey’s comment unravels a layer of reading in Mannoni’s text which inferred that the colonial dyad Mannoni suggests is inscribed on sexual difference. The Malagasy’s desire to be dominated and submit to mastery suggests that for Mannoni, the state of being colonised is a feminine state per se. This is a point of convergence, as I will later show between Fanon and Mannoni, but for the moment, it suffices to say that despite its apologetic character *Prospero and Caliban* makes a crucial point about the colonial condition. As Ranjana Khanna, Jock McCulloch and mostly Christopher Lane have underlined, Fanon missed an important point about Mannoni’s argument, namely that personality traits are not biologically inherited positions but the only conditions of possibility of colonial subjectivity.⁶⁵ McCulloch argues that ‘[T]here is no *constitutional* imperative governing the Malagasy’s dependence complex. If a Malagasy were brought up in Europe he would exhibit inferiority and not dependence.’⁶⁶ If Mannoni wrote about the colonial situation with the certainty of the rigidity of the colonial structure as a lived reality, he also saw individuals and groups as underpinned by unconscious forces that cannot be predicted. Mannoni emphasised that an unconscious desire to dominate motivates the coloniser to pursue a vocation from which they ‘derive some inner solace’⁶⁷ and ‘psychological satisfaction;’⁶⁸ he did not conclude that these desires are necessarily fulfilled. As Khanna stresses, for Mannoni ‘the colonial situation can satisfy neither the inferiority of the European nor the dependency of the Malagasy, it is coming undone.’⁶⁹

While Mannoni writes about the colonial situation without taking into consideration the construction of racial difference, Fanon recognised that the lived reality of racism exists in the field of vision and representation. Mannoni used the conventional imagery of cannibalism to designate the native’s

⁶⁴ Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography*, 188.

⁶⁵ Christopher Lane, “Psychoanalysis and Colonialism Redux: Why Mannoni’s “Prospero Complex” Still Haunts Us,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 25, no. 3/4 (2002): 127–49.

⁶⁶ Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul White Artefact: Fanon’s Clinical Psychology and Social Theory* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 23.

⁶⁷ Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, 88.

⁶⁸ Mannoni, 121.

⁶⁹ Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 165.

psychology, as a form of a draining dependency that consumes the coloniser and infantilises the Malagasy. Fanon, on the other hand, gives a prominent place to cannibalism, suggesting that it has consistently been amongst the most popular forms of black objectification: ‘I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: “Sho’ good eatin’.”⁷⁰ Whereas Mannoni suggested that colonialism effectively stems from conflicts within the European psyche per se, his use of Prospero and Caliban as the main figures to impersonate this relationship already imply unconscious identifications at work, which although disavowed or repressed, actually demonstrate that in his work, there is a profound presence of a colonial unconscious. In fact, we could relate Mannoni’s use of the imagery of Caliban along the lines of the classic psychoanalytic argument of racism as projection:

If we look at a black man we shall perhaps find out something about our own unconscious—not that the white man’s image of the black man tells us anything about his own inner self, though it indicates that part of him which he has not been able to accept: it reveals his secret self, not as he is, but rather as he fears he may be. The negro, then, is the white man’s fear of himself.⁷¹

Nonetheless, this is not a thesis sustained coherently throughout Mannoni’s work, but it is precisely the kind of thesis—the ‘negro as impersonating the white man’s unconscious fears’ that Fanon draws upon. Analysing dreams collected from his native Madagascar informants, Mannoni finds feelings of anxiety expressed in the form of being chased by aggressive animals and in fears of fragmented or devoured body parts.⁷² These images, Mannoni claims, express Oedipal anxieties and fears of being castrated by symbolic father figures, like bulls, oxen or soldiers. For Fanon, on the contrary, the colonised did not entertain the privilege of experiencing Oedipal anxieties—‘the discoveries of Freud are of no use to us here.’⁷³ His response to Mannoni is focused on the lack of historical context surrounding the dreams—instead of offering disastrous arbitrary interpretations, Fanon contends, Mannoni could have recognised the fragmented social body, the thousands of native deaths, ‘at the centre of which no real relationship can be established, where dissension breaks out in every

⁷⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1986, 84–85.

⁷¹ Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, 191.

⁷² Mannoni.

⁷³ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1986, 152.

direction.⁷⁴ Instead, Fanon insists that the disintegration of the social bond has much more concrete effects, which cannot be repressed and condensed in the work of the dream: ‘the rifle of the Senegalese soldier is not a penis but a genuine rifle, model Lebel 1916.’⁷⁵ These effects can be nowhere more visible than in the body of the colonised per se.

6.4 The Body as Threshold

During Fanon’s professional experience as a psychiatrist in medical establishments in France he came across a series of cases of intense psychosomatic symptoms, with no profound medical explanation. In an essay written during the same time as *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon documented medical encounters between French doctors and Arab immigrants, in France and exposed the centrality of fear, dispossession and uncertainty that dominated the realities of some of his immigrant patients.⁷⁶ Titled *The North African Syndrome* the essay argues that this syndrome was an exegesis provided from doctors that erased the patient’s pathology and avoided questioning the limitations of a Western, positivistic medicine. Instead of questioning the treatment proposed, doctors dealing with Arab patients dismissed their symptoms and nullified them as individuals. ‘In the face of this pain without lesion, this illness distributed in and over the whole body, this continuous suffering, the easiest attitude, to which one comes more or less rapidly, is the negation of any morbidity. When you come down to it, the North African is a simulator, a liar, a malingerer, a sluggard a thief.’⁷⁷ Through these psychosomatic symptoms, Fanon identified the effects of racism emerging from social dispossession—‘without a family, without love, without human relations, without communion with the group’—and becoming transformed into a physical dispossession: ‘he will feel himself emptied, without life, in a bodily struggle with death [...] and what is more pathetic than this man with robust muscles who tells us in his truly broken voice, “Doctor, I’m going to die”?’⁷⁸

Reminiscent of Freud’s treatment of hysteria, Fanon cautions us that we must put forward the body, which never lies in isolation from the racist gaze. Gibson and Beneduce go further and argue that what Fanon suggests is that the medical

⁷⁴ Fanon, 104.

⁷⁵ Fanon, 106.

⁷⁶ Frantz Fanon, “The ‘North African Syndrome,’” in *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 3.

⁷⁷ Fanon, 7.

⁷⁸ Fanon, 13.

encounter is never free of politics—‘a drama is played out.’⁷⁹ The vagueness in symptoms of pain and illness make the African body ‘opaque, unintelligible and suspect.’⁸⁰ Because the Arab male body cannot be penetrated by the Western positivistic gaze of the doctor, in a context where trust and cooperation are fundamental for the deployment of treatment, the black body is rendered impenetrable and therefore suspicious, guilty of its otherness and thus, nullified, objectified, threatening, ‘phobogenic.’ According to Gibson and Beneduce, Fanon makes a significant claim: physical pain and suffering, are ‘*always politically and racially situated*.’⁸¹ Both psychological and physical strain manifest the alienation that forms the lived experience of blackness. In fact, images of fragmented, shattered, dismembered bodies are at the centre of the experience of having a black body in a white world: ‘What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood.’⁸²

In a famous footnote from *The Ego and the Id*, Freud stresses that it is impossible to think of psychic space without incorporating the role of the body like a shield and a surface. The body makes graphically visible the fragility against ‘painful illnesses’ and pain in general and gives shape and materiality to experiences.⁸³ ‘The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego,’ to which he added:

The ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides, as we have seen above, representing the superficies of the mental apparatus.⁸⁴

Thinking the body as a projection of the ego, Freud frames it as a corporeal reality that functions as a border with the external world; it is subjected to knowledge from the subject and from others. Although Freud does not develop this idea further, Butler’s reading of Freud presents a crucial extension of this view. The body is a corporeal reality subjected to ‘*racializing* interpellations’—symbolic

⁷⁹ Gibson and Beneduce, *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics*, 124.

⁸⁰ Gibson and Beneduce, 124.

⁸¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1986, 113. Emphasis in the original.

⁸² Fanon, 113.

⁸³ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and The Id*, ed. Angela Richards, trans. Strachey, James, 2nd ed., *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Volume XIX (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 26.

⁸⁴ Freud, XIX:26.

structures do not precede but attribute meaning and ‘materiality’ to the body.⁸⁵ A similar view is presented by Teresa de Lauretis who argued that the body is ‘a permeable boundary [...] and a site of incessant material negotiations between the external world, on one side, comprising social institutions, other beings and things, the gaze of the other, and on the other side, the internal world of the psyche, the drives, the unconscious and the ego’s mechanisms of defence [...]’.⁸⁶ These formulations of psychoanalysis, which open the unconscious to the body, spring from a Fanonian psychoanalytic schema that conceives the subject as inconceivable outside the social world.

But more influential for Fanon’s theorisation of racial difference and its effects, was Lacan’s account of the emergence of the ego. Lacan argues that one’s imaginary understanding about oneself is fundamentally an illusion of coherence that is confirmed externally.⁸⁷ Without getting into great detail here, Lacan’s early thesis of the emergence of the ego was consolidated in what he called the ‘mirror stage,’ a phase in development which takes place from the age of six months, when the child becomes capable of recognising its own image in the mirror. Standing in front of a mirror and supported by its guardian (or parent), the infant sees its reflection and assumes an image which is then symbolically affirmed by the guardian. The mirror stage is effectively an *identification*: ‘the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image’ (an ideal image of the self).⁸⁸ Lacan makes a significant distinction between the *I* as ‘precipitated in a primordial form’ and the imago in which the *I* becomes solidified and objectified through the symbolic, the language of the guardian (‘this is you’).⁸⁹ The precipitate of the *I* and the symbolic production of the *I* are asymptotical—meaning they can never cross-cut or osculate (have a tangent point of contact)—instead it is the subject’s task to constantly work through this irresolvable discordance. Lacan’s mirror stage illustrated how the individual is always penetrated from an external force that shapes it from without, resulting in the emergence of self-consciousness, a form of *Cogito* that is not grounded on any natural or biological traits; it is beyond essentialism. The mirror stage highlights how subjectivity is

⁸⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 17–18.

⁸⁶ Lauretis, “Difference Embodied: Reflections on Black Skin, White Masks,” 57.

⁸⁷ Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2001), 1–6.

⁸⁸ Lacan, 2. Emphasis in the original.

⁸⁹ Lacan, 2.

always dependent on an external source for the validation of its existence, which makes it essentially alienated.

Thought through the irreducibility of the body, Fanon exposed the limits of psychoanalysis and punctured its acclaimed universality by arguing that amidst a racist world, where blackness is woven together by fragmented narratives of ‘cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects’ and so on,⁹⁰ the black man cannot claim agency; ‘the black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man.’⁹¹ Fanon’s reading of the Lacanian mirror stage marks a key intervention in firstly the ‘universalizing tendency of psychoanalytic reductionism’ by offering a racialised version of the mirror whereby the onlooker is not a neutral other, but a subject interpellated by the social-political dynamics of colonialism;⁹² the gaze looking at the black body is a white, racist gaze. Fanon develops the concept of an ‘epidermal schema’ as an excess to the ‘corporeal schema,’ namely, blackness as an additional feature of having a body—a black body is never just a black body, but it is ‘overdetermined’ through the gaze of the other. This way, Fanon punctures psychoanalysis and embroiders a narrative that accounts for racial difference that is not merely sociological, but psychological too. As previously shown, although Fanon began *Black Skin, White Masks* from the assumption that the black body does not exist, he unveiled a body suffering, afraid of dying, on the verge of disappearance, experiencing an imaginary amputation, haemorrhaging. Dismissing the Oedipus complex as inapplicable to the condition of the black man, indeed, Fanon moves a step further giving a voice, a face and a body to the debilitating effects of racism and dissociating effectively, the psychoanalytic narrative of racism as projection—that Mannoni discussed—into racism as a discourse with physical power. What is left to be examined, though, is the nature and ontology of the racist gaze, which is closely tied to the white unconscious and where, perhaps unsurprisingly, Fanon situates—and he is the first one to do so—the cannibalistic fantasies.

⁹⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 84–85.

⁹¹ Fanon, 110.

⁹² Stephen Frosh, “Psychoanalysis, Colonialism, Racism,” *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, American Psychological Association, 33, no. 3 (2013): 146.

6.5 'Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up': Fanon, Racism and Homophobia

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon extends his understanding of the ramifications of racial difference and racism in a culture that has systematically constructed the black body as phobogenic—meaning being the object of phobias. The book's most famous passage is an example of phobia 'mise-en-scène,' as Vicky Lebeau explained, a piece of theory 'suffused by the work of condensation.'⁹³ The instance conglomerates a series of verbal, non-verbal and unconscious transmissions that capture the experience of being objectified and reduced through the gaze, which is at the centre of Fanon's analysis of race. Whilst a medical student in Lyon, Fanon becomes aware of being seen and not being seen, by a 'little white boy'⁹⁴ and his mother. This is the passage, and it is worth quoting it at length:

"Look at the nigger!... Mama, a Negro!... Hell, he's getting mad..." Take no notice, sir, he does not know that you are as civilised as we... My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look a nigger, it's cold, the nigger is shivering, the nigger is shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger, the nigger is shivering with cold, that cold that goes through your bones, the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up.⁹⁵

Fanon regarded phobia as the key to understanding the white human's unconscious, and therefore he proposed to unpack the motivations behind what he called 'negrophobia,' the fear of the black man. 'What is phobia?', asks Fanon.⁹⁶ Throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*, he traces two specific kinds of phobias: firstly, the fear of the black man as rapist, as, according to Fanon, shared by white women. Secondly, the fear that 'the nigger's going to eat me up' we find in the words of the young boy. Rape and cannibalism, sexuality, fusion and orality comprise Fanon's analysis of Negrophobia, disclosing an inherent

⁹³ Vicky Lebeau, "Children of Violence," in *Black Skin, White Masks: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Max Silverman (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), 141.

⁹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 2nd ed. (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 114. While Fanon refers to a white boy, Bhabha has mistakenly assumed the anecdote as occurring between Fanon and a little white girl. For a thorough discussion of how this slip shapes the gendered and racial identifications see: Gwenn Bergner, "Who Is That Masked Woman? Or, the Role of Gender in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*," *PMLA* 110, no. 1 (1995): 75–88.

⁹⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1986, 113–14.

⁹⁶ Fanon, 154.

connection between anxiety, death, violence and annihilation embedded in the white unconscious. Fanon's psychological explanation of phobia is premised upon the view that the choice of the phobic object is a priori 'overdetermined'.⁹⁷ Following what he calls, a psychoanalytic 'complete orthodoxy' Fanon opined that the phobogenic object is invested with qualities that are excessive; they appeal to sexual anxieties and fantasies of destruction. 'The object is endowed with evil intentions and with all the attributes of a malefic power.'⁹⁸

To unpack why the black body is placed at the centre of phobias, Fanon explores the exaggerated black sexuality in the white imaginary and refers to the 'hallucinatory' sexual potency of the black man which is most clearly articulated in the female fantasy of rape: '*a Negro is raping me*'.⁹⁹ Fanon argues that this fantasy expresses a concealed desire: 'basically, does this fear of rape not itself cry out for rape?'¹⁰⁰ Following Marie Bonaparte and Helen Deutsch, Fanon takes the rape fantasy a step further, arguing that it is an unconscious aggression of a woman towards her mother's body; the white woman wants the black man's penis to rape herself, and through that to rape her mother too. Thus, Fanon pronounces the actual content of the fear of rape: 'I wish the Negro would rip me open as I would have ripped a woman open.'¹⁰¹ However, this fantasy does not explain the cross-racial identification with the black man; why is the black man required for this fantasy. This cross-racial identification, as we saw, has been left unexplored in Melanie Klein's account too (although in this case was between a white and a black woman). Fanon uses the psychoanalytic idea about the female's double Oedipus complex, which is permitted because of her complex physical sexuality. Bonaparte argued that female masochism is a concealed sexual desire for the mother (homosexuality) since it is comprised of a phallic (clitoral) aggression that originally was directed towards the mother but is eventually returned towards the woman's self.¹⁰² Additionally, Bonaparte saw female sexuality as progressing from the clitoral to the clitoral-vaginal and finally to formally vaginal sexuality.¹⁰³ What one must assume, Fanon says, when thinking about the maturity of female sexuality is that, in '*Negrophobic*' women,

⁹⁷ Fanon, 155.

⁹⁸ Fanon, 155.

⁹⁹ Fanon, 178.

¹⁰⁰ Fanon, 156.

¹⁰¹ Fanon, 179.

¹⁰² Marie Bonaparte, *Female Sexuality*, trans. John Rodker (New York: Grove Press, 1953).

¹⁰³ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1986, 178.

there must be some remains of the early, clitoral sexual phase that carries forward a phallic aggression towards the mother: ‘in her as in the little boy there will be impulses directed at the mother; she too would like to disembowel the mother.’¹⁰⁴ The reason why the white woman identifies with the black man is because ‘the Negro is the genital.’¹⁰⁵ Using the black man’s excessive sexual potency, the white woman attacks the mother, in fantasy. At the same time, observes Walton, she also repudiates herself, satisfying her own guilt for her aggressiveness towards the mother—by allowing herself to be raped.¹⁰⁶

In her reading of Fanon’s account of rape fantasy, Walton observes that technically Fanon displaces the aggression projected on the black body onto the maternal body.¹⁰⁷ It is her mother that the white woman wants to attack, and for this purpose, uses the black man as an object, an objectified, excessive penis which can help her fulfil the fantasy. Walton critiques Fanon for replicating the view that female sexuality is structured on ‘masochism,’¹⁰⁸ a reading, which as we saw earlier, Mannoni was keen on proposing with regards to the black man. The displacement of masochism from the black man (Mannoni) to the white woman (Fanon) exposes that it is a normative, heterosexual masculinity that corroborates processes of sexual and racial othering within psychoanalysis—a point which neither Fanon nor Mannoni managed to articulate.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, Vicky Lebeau fleshed out the intricacies of Fanon’s argument towards a slightly different direction. She argues that if we look beyond Fanon’s problematic displacement, what he seems to be arguing is that there is an implicit *structural* aetiology within the psychoanalysis of white femininity that entwines female sexuality with ‘Negrophobia.’ This is why, according to Lebeau, Fanon finds ‘such an acknowledgment—a projection of thought, of painful thought, on to the white woman—[...] remarkable not least because it begins to draw attention to the overdetermination of the interpretation of sexuality and phobia,’ but because for him, it signals a ‘liberation from thinking.’¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Fanon, 179.

¹⁰⁵ Fanon, 180.

¹⁰⁶ Jean Walton, *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams: Race, Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 27.

¹⁰⁷ Jean Walton, *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams: Race, Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 27.

¹⁰⁸ Walton, 29.

¹⁰⁹ Walton, 29.

¹¹⁰ Lebeau, “Children of Violence,” 135.

Examining Fanon's argument around 'Negrophobia' and female sexuality, Lebeau argues that what Fanon discovers in the unconscious of the white woman is that her transition to vaginal female sexuality implies that the woman must stop oscillating between clitoral and vaginal sexuality. She must therefore abandon the possibility of satisfying her aggression towards the maternal body in fantasy—and give up internalised forms of female masochism. This theory, however, relies on the cultural presupposition of the black man as an object, a '*predestined depositary* of a young girl's aggression.'¹¹¹ The psychoanalytic account of female subjectivity is necessarily compatible with the black man rape-fantasy; Negrophobia is 'a form of sacrifice.'¹¹² What is being sacrificed is the black man's humanness at the expense of white femininity's aggression. In sustaining the cultural stereotype of the black rapist, says Fanon—and I am echoing Lebeau's reading here—what comes to the fore is 'the collective representation of the infant's fantasy of disembowelling the mother [which] sustains its fusion of passivity and aggression; the cultural stereotype—the "Negro myth", the black imago—displaces *and* re-enacts the drama of self-other violation that Fanon discovers in the white girl's unconscious.'¹¹³ In other words, what the rape fantasy unveils is that the black man's body is the necessary excess; an excess that is articulated through Fanon's epidermal schema that is added on the corporeal one. The black skin is a surface vital for the psychoanalytic theoretical formation of female sexuality.

While following the sexual anxiety embedded in 'Negrophobia,' leads us with both Lebeau and Walton into the deconstruction of a stereotype at the cost of the establishment of an other (the black man who rapes—the white woman who is a sexual masochist), I now wish to explore how Fanon scrutinises the cannibal trope and the kind of unconscious desire that is exposed behind it. In other words, what kind of imagos and phantasms are embedded in the psychoanalytic white unconscious, once we access it, as Fanon did, from the point of view of a cannibalistic fantasy?¹¹⁴ And to quote Burman what 'of portraying all this as instigated or precipitated by a child?'¹¹⁵ In the aforementioned example, both the boy and the black man are involved in a gradual culmination of tension, the

¹¹¹ Lebeau, 134.

¹¹² Lebeau, 134.

¹¹³ Lebeau, 134.

¹¹⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1986, 156.

¹¹⁵ Erica Burman, "Fanon's Lacan and the Traumatogenic Child: Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Dynamics of Colonialism and Racism," *Theory, Culture and Society* 33, no. 4 (2016): 6.

black man is 'shivering' the boy is 'trembling,' and cannibalism and engulfment in the body of the other is the climaxing moment in this staging of the psychic effects of the racialising gaze. There is a latent content in this encounter, which is that of the white boy's/man's repressed homosexuality, as another layer of 'Negrophobia.' Fanon explains: 'The Negrophobic woman is in fact nothing but a putative sexual partner—just as the Negrophobic man is a repressed homosexual.'¹¹⁶ While Fanon's discussion of white and black femininity has been extensively addressed in literature, little emphasis has been attributed to the fact that he links the boy's fear of being eaten with Negrophobia and latent, male homosexuality.

Against the racism of the white man that reduces the black man to a phallic object that is both feared and desired, Fanon juxtaposes a psychoanalytically-informed argument. Drawing on the persistent representation of the black man as a 'cannibal' Fanon illustrates the fears and desires of white masculinity. Firstly, Fanon acknowledges that racism is sustained through the Western epistemology and biology that acknowledges the cannibal trope as the essence of blackness: 'My chromosomes were supposed to have a few thicker or thinner genes representing cannibalism. In addition to the *sex-linked*, the scholars had now discovered the *racial-linked*.'¹¹⁷ The inherent link between racial difference and the cannibal trope, Fanon observes, becomes universalised through the naturalisation of race when it is seen as a biological category—rooted in the most miniscule fragment of the human body; the container of genetic information, the chromosome. To counter the racism of Western science, Fanon proposes a psychological explanation for the longevity of the fears surrounding the black man's body, because the 'the myth of the bad nigger is part of the collective unconscious.'¹¹⁸ Thus, Fanon puts forward the argument that racism when expressed as fear, what he calls 'Negrophobia,' is because of the white man's latent homosexuality—the unacknowledged sexual desires of the Oedipus complex. The racist is the white man who openly shares the fantasy of the black man as 'sensual,' or 'prolific' or having a 'prodigious vitality.'¹¹⁹

Daniel Boyarin has argued that Fanon's text is caught in the threshold of 'partial decolonization' between a colonial and a post-colonial milieu which allows

¹¹⁶ Fanon, 121.

¹¹⁷ Fanon, 120.

¹¹⁸ Fanon, 92.

¹¹⁹ Fanon, 201.

him to circumstantially grasp the white, male colonial gaze and look at himself and his blackness through this.¹²⁰ Fanon then ‘recovers his “maleness” [...] by pathologizing his male and female enemies as “feminized”’.¹²¹ More precisely, when discussing what he calls ‘Negrophobia’ Fanon brings the example of a Jewish physician, named Michel Salomon.¹²² In this case, the sensual essentialism of the black body is nothing but a manifestation of what Fanon sees as a ‘revulsive’ (Jewish) male homosexuality: ‘in addition, M. Salomon, I have a confession to make to you: I have never been able, without revulsion, to hear a *man* say of another man: “he is so sensual!” I do not know what the sensuality of a man is.’¹²³ Fanon’s move here needs careful consideration because through Salomon’s sexualisation of the black body, Fanon establishes his argument about racism as latent homosexuality. For Fanon, Salomon becomes the par excellence repressed white, homosexual masculinity that craves for the alleged ‘sensuality’ of the black body. Nevertheless, one is obliged to ask: why does Fanon use the account of a Jewish physician to detach the fear and lust for blackness from essentialism? I suggest that we should read Fanon’s pairing of homosexuality and racism in the context of his overall critique to psychoanalysis; a critique of psychoanalysis’ refusal to grasp forms of otherness beyond sexuality.

Fanon’s example about the latent homosexuality of the white racist exposes how for psychoanalysis—a discipline with Jewish origins—race cannot be theorised independently from sexuality. This is why Fanon insisted that racial difference is a matter of skin colour, of being *seen* as a dehumanised, threatening cannibal, an experience, which Fanon mistakenly argues is not shared among Jews: the Jew ‘belongs to the race of those who since the beginning of time have never known cannibalism. What an idea, to eat one’s father! Simple enough, one has only not to be a nigger.’¹²⁴ Ignoring the forms of anti-Semitism that have drawn on imageries

¹²⁰ Daniel Boyarin, “Homophobia and the Postcoloniality of the ‘Jewish Science,’” in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, ed. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 181.

¹²¹ Boyarin, 181.

¹²² Here is the full passage: ‘Beyond all question the most interesting testimony is presented by Michel Salomon. Although he defends himself against the charge, he stinks of racism. He is a Jew, he has a “millennial experience of anti-Semitism” and yet he is a racist. Listen to him: “But to say that the mere fact of his skin, of his hair, of that aura of sensuality that he [the Negro] gives off, does not spontaneously give rise to a certain embarrassment, whether of attraction or of revulsion, is to reject the fact in the name of a ridiculous prudery that has never solved anything...”’ Fanon, 156.

¹²³ Fanon, 201. Emphasis in the original.

¹²⁴ Fanon, 115.

of cannibalism as discussed in the first chapter, Fanon substitutes one form of racism with another one. For Boyarin, Fanon's anti-Semitic implication is related to masculine anxieties and fantasies about white masculinity. Homophobia, racism and anti-Semitism stem from the fact that in the colonial discourse both the Jewish body and the black body are both 'misrecognized as feminine.'¹²⁵ 'the black man is a penis; the Jew is a clitoris. Neither has the phallus.'¹²⁶

Furthermore, the white unconscious as the source of cannibalistic fears and fantasies is the racial site where white masculinity and Jewish masculinity meet. In the white unconscious, the racial signification of the black man, expressed through the cannibal trope signals a latent homosexual desire to 'eat one's father'¹²⁷ that has gone astray. The racist slur of 'being a nigger'¹²⁸ then amalgamates this repressed homosexual desire through the discourse of racial difference. In other words, the only way white men can dissociate their homosexual feelings would be through the image of the black man who 'in being a nigger' 'eats his father' and fulfils a repressed colonial fantasy. Fanon here addresses the unacknowledged aspect of the Oedipal dynamics, where in not accounting for the son's homosexuality towards the father, the site of the colony becomes exigent for the projection, actualisation and amalgamation of the white man's homosexual terrors. While for Fanon the first point of criticism towards psychoanalysis rests on the Jewish complicity in the racialisation and objectification of blackness, the second point directly addresses the question of the Oedipus complex. Intriguingly, while Fanon brings to the fore the toxic effects of the European compulsive heteronormativity, his argument loses its critical edge by refusing to problematise European patriarchy. Instead, Fanon proclaims his revulsion for homosexuality and considers it symptomatic exclusively of whiteness:

Let me observe at once that I had no opportunity to establish the overt presence of homosexuality in Martinique. This must be viewed as the result of the absence of the Oedipus complex in the Antilles. The schema of homosexuality is well enough known. We should not overlook, however, the existence of what are called there 'men dressed like women' or 'godmothers'. Generally, they wear shirts and skirts. *But I am convinced* that they lead normal sex lives. They can take a punch like any 'he-man' and they are not impervious to the allures of women-fish and vegetable merchants. In Europe, on the other hand, I have known

¹²⁵ Boyarin, "Homophobia and the Postcoloniality of the 'Jewish Science,'" 183.

¹²⁶ Boyarin, 180.

¹²⁷ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 115.

¹²⁸ Fanon, 115.

several Martinicans who became homosexuals, always passive. But this was by no means a neurotic homosexuality. For them it was a means to a livelihood, as pimping is for others.¹²⁹

Fanon's main strategy in dismantling the racism of white masculinity passes through a heteronormative context and an anti-Semitic stain. He claims 'the absence of the Oedipus complex in the Antilles,' namely that the black man need not to identify, compete, overthrow, his father. For Fanon, the black man's sexuality is not ordered by castration fears and cannibalistic anxieties towards the black father, to safeguard his masculinity, male potency and phallic power. Here, Fanon's purpose is not to critique the universality of the Oedipus complex and its uncritical application in the colonial context. On the contrary, by affirming the absence of the Oedipus his aim is to link racism to white male sexuality. Unlike the female rape fantasy, in the cannibal trope we find another layer of repression—namely that sexual desire is not expressed as such but through the place of the mouth or the orifice. De Lauretis observed that Fanon's rhetoric about homosexuality is symptomatic of homophobia as well: 'negation (there are no homosexuals in Martinique) and disavowal (there are men dressed like women, but I am convinced they lead normal lives).'¹³⁰ In the white, psychoanalytic unconscious Fanon encounters the body of the black man as the 'depository' of sexual anxieties, representing everything that cannot be acknowledged in the narrow boundaries of the normativity of white sexuality: while the 'Negrophobic' woman wishes to 'rip the mother open' the 'Negrophobic' man wishes to be engulfed by the father.

6.6 'We should not allow ourselves to forget': Fanon, the Child and the Cannibal Trope

One final point that needs to be addressed is to do with the fact that in several instances throughout *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon brings together the knowledge about racialisation, as it manifests through the cannibal trope, and the voice of a child. Burman has theorised the concept of the child as a method through which, in Fanon's work, processes of racial, gendered and developmental identification emerge.¹³¹ In the famous passage 'Look Mama a Negro' the child

¹²⁹ Fanon, 180. Emphasis in the original.

¹³⁰ Lauretis, "Difference Embodied: Reflections on Black Skin, White Masks," 63.

¹³¹ Erica Burman, "Fanon and the Child: Pedagogies of Subjectification and Transformation," *Curriculum Inquiry* 46, no. 3 (2016): 265–85.

becomes the agency that voices the fear of being eaten by the black man, to his mother's embarrassment. Burman emphasises the need to pay attention not only to how, by spelling out this racist smear the child becomes divested from the innocence of childhood, but also how the category of the child becomes the site where the political possibilities of post-colonial futures become amalgamated. Fanon's child is fragmented, undertheorised and situated in the tensions between innocence, helplessness, vulnerability; the child also becomes the agency where post-colonial possibilities co-exist alongside the 'transcendent repository of a racist culture.'¹³²

For Fanon, the racialisation of the black man lies in the interstices between the hegemonic white masculinity and boyhood. It comes to being through the interplay between colonial reality and infantile fantasy, adult masculinity and boy's play. In magazines put together by white men for 'little white men,' Fanon writes, 'the 'Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage are always symbolised by Negroes or Indians.'¹³³ Fanon explains that the cannibalistic fantasy dominates colonial representations; 'the white little boy, becomes an explorer, an adventurer, a missionary "who faces the danger of being eaten by wicked Negroes"'¹³⁴ It is unclear, in Fanon's passage, if the little white boy mimics the coloniser or it is colonialism, which, for the white man is being regarded as a *game* (just like police and thieves). The representation of blackness in white children's literature is there where Fanon witnesses how the romantic fantasies of exploration and conquest invite 'little white men' into the world of older white colonialists, by demanding the racialized evil other and endorsing the imaginary victory over his body. Nevertheless, for the white child exploration and conquest does not seem to signify anything else but play—Western culture abides with nursery rhymes, fairy tales and children's stories about figures that consume, swallow, bite and devour.¹³⁵ However, Fanon's point is that despite the apparent virtuousness, the white child is situated in the intersection between the grown-up racist, colonial masculinity and the innocent play of exploration. This tension, as Burman put it, "reveals", by [the child's] own implication within it, the social

¹³² Burman, "Fanon's Lacan and the Traumatogenic Child: Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Dynamics of Colonialism and Racism," 21.

¹³³ Fanon, 146.

¹³⁴ Fanon, 146.

¹³⁵ Marina Warner, "Fee Fie Fo Fum: The Child in the Jaws of the Story," in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

order he is entering.¹³⁶ But, does the same hold true for the black boy?

Fanon recounts another scene of encounter between a black scout boy and three white boys, as seen in a children's paper:

Recently, in a children's paper, I read a caption to a picture in which a young black Boy Scout was showing a Negro village to three or four white scouts: "This is the kettle where my ancestors cooked yours." One will gladly concede that there are no more Negro cannibals, but we should not allow ourselves to forget... Quite seriously, however, I think that the writer of that caption has done a genuine service to Negroes without knowing it. For the white child who reads it will not form a mental picture of the Negro in the act of eating the white man, but rather as having eaten him. Unquestionably, this is progress.¹³⁷

While Fanon agrees that the cannibal trope entertains no actual currency ('there are no more Negro cannibals'), this does not automatically lead to the undoing of the harm colonial racism has inflicted. Instead, the cannibal trope has become consolidated into a history—a distorted history according to which it was the 'black ancestors' that threatened the white ones. This is a form of history that is structured on biological essentialism, displacing the responsibility of violence on the so-called *naturally* threatening black appetite, and not on the white consuming colonial oppression. More crucially the cannibal trope has been turned from a question of trauma into one of memory: 'we should not allow ourselves to forget.'¹³⁸ Fanon, in this instance, does not have the white child speak but the black child confronting the consequences of the hegemonic Western historical narrative. The black child becomes the heir of the intergenerational trauma of colonial racism, and it is the figure that Fanon situates in the frictions between colonial memory and its post-colonial workings.

6.7 Conclusion: Fanon and the Post-Colonial Unconscious

Fanon's approach to the question of the cannibal trope is vital for a genuinely decolonial strategy to the European unconscious. The tendency of psychoanalysis—as we saw in the three case studies that preceded—to theorise the cannibal trope in relation to the so-called primitives that are naturally threatening becomes reversed in Fanon's theory. The trajectory of his argument

¹³⁶ Burman, "Fanon and the Child: Pedagogies of Subjectification and Transformation," 273.

¹³⁷ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 203.

¹³⁸ Fanon, 203.

creates a significant challenge for psychoanalysis. Instead of theorising the colonial subject by outlining how psychoanalytic pillars become translated in the context of the colony (for example the progress of psychosexual development, sexual difference, the primary unity with the mother, as Róheim does), Fanon's theory exposes why the psychoanalytic imaginary is foreclosed in relation to subjectivities which are socially constructed as racialised: the black body is the limit of psychoanalytic discourse. I have drawn attention to two major instances in Fanon's text that work around this limit: firstly, how the black body cannot claim any right to agency independent from the white, colonial imaginary—which we saw in Fanon's discussion of Mannoni and Lacan. Secondly, how the black body can only exist as a libidinal object, inflicting fear and lust (it consumes, and it can be consumed). The colonial imagery of cannibalistic figures seized by heroic white men, which as we saw in Chapter Two frames the colonial representation of the non-European, exposes for Fanon the latent, homosexual desires that cannot be claimed and experienced within the European patriarchy. In the context of the colony, then, male homosexual desires become fulfilled through the racist stain of the black man as a cannibal—just as the white female homosexual desires become fulfilled through the racist fantasy of the black man that rapes. Fanon's deviation from the traditional psychoanalytic inclination to naturalise racial difference through the concept of excessive and transgressive appetites, allows space for post-colonial psychoanalytic perspectives where the racist stain of cannibalism becomes a constitutional aspect of the European, colonial, patriarchal unconscious.

Nevertheless, what seems to emerge as a decolonial critique of psychoanalysis risks resolving into similar forms of othering and dehumanisation that are not far from the colonial Manicheism. This is because Fanon's reversal of the cannibal trope fails to escape a justification of racism as the outcome of a non-heteronormative sexuality. Fanon explains racism and the construction of racialised objects of phobia through a repressed or silenced homosexuality. He situates the fantasies surrounding the site of the colony as complementary to the European, patriarchal and heteronormative libidinal economy. The trajectory of Fanon's theory then leans towards the heterosexual imperative that as Butler cautions: '[reduces] racial differences to the derivative effects of sexual difference (as if sexual difference were not only autonomous in relation to racial

articulation but somehow more prior, in a temporal or ontological sense).¹³⁹ Rather, Fanon's argument exposes how the psychoanalytic emphasis only on the inner, psychic structures means that otherness can only be addressed, analysed, accounted for, in terms of sexuality. Fanon's limitations bring to the fore that from a psychoanalytic point of view, racism cannot be explained unless through a heterosexist assumption.

What is more, Fanon's argument could propose a radical claim for the reformulation of the patriarchal and heteronormative European sexuality. For example, the primacy of sexuality and its repression as the reason for social discontents, violence and oppression is a question that we partially encountered in the case of Róheim and will be more thoroughly discussed in the context of radical, social re-readings of psychoanalysis from post-Freudian Marxist theorists, in the last chapter. However, his negation of homosexuality in Martinique suggests otherwise; 'They can take a punch like any 'he-man' and they are not impervious to the allures of women-fish[...].'¹⁴⁰ It is not only the cannibal trope that expresses European fantasies for the body of the colonised, but homosexuality too lies in the unconscious of those who have conceived and defended the Oedipus complex. Fanon's reversal of the racist stain of the cannibal trope does a favour to psychoanalysis by showing that the natural association between blackness and transgressive appetites is exclusively a European fantasy. On the other hand, this argument needs to be taken with a grain of salt, as it points to the limits of post-colonial readings of psychoanalysis when these are exhausted on the role of sexuality as the only possible source of subjectification.

To conclude, in Fanon's theory we encounter a pivotal moment for the decolonisation of psychoanalysis, marked by the consolidation of the colonial unconscious and the emergence of a post-colonial one. Contrary to the avant-garde approaches seeing the cannibal trope as an opportunity for agency (as Andrade claimed) and an example of how racial differences create dynamics of inequality among the colonised (as Césaire's case shows) Fanon's case study exposes what is at stake in the colonial fantasy of the cannibal trope from an unconscious point of view. His work then makes the cannibal trope becomes an outdated practice—a question of ancestral antagonism and heritage that purges colonial violence and plagues the colonised (male child). What is left out when

¹³⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 18.

¹⁴⁰ Fanon, 180.

Fanon takes apart the cannibal trope—and what he refuses to address, namely the homophobia, the misogyny and the anti-Semitism—become the axioms that shape the feminised fears embedded in the post-colonial unconscious. As we will see in the last chapter, while the colonial imagery of the cannibal trope ceases to gain theoretical currency in psychoanalytic discourse, the same does not hold true for the fears of otherness and the anxieties about the ‘other’ who consumes, swallows, appropriates, engulfs, and annihilates through the body.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Trajectories of Liberation: Towards the Decolonisation of Psychoanalysis

7.1 Alienated Bodies: Sexuality and the Politics of Liberation

The previous chapter sought to trace how without Fanon's emphasis on how the social impacts on the psychological, and vice versa, a decolonial approach to psychoanalysis would not be possible. Fanon's deconstruction of an interminable colonial myth that sapped the humanity of the colonised subject comes at the end of two psychoanalytic trajectories: firstly, the unacknowledged dependence of psychoanalysis on a colonial and social mytheme about racial difference and secondly the role of white fantasies in the construction of the black body. Fanon's contribution prepares the ground for a major decolonising moment and allows us to understand psychoanalysis as both a practice for reading the colony and a discourse not freed from the traps of the essentialism of race. It is through Fanon's exteriority to psychoanalysis that we can identify its limits and construct a decolonial and feminist lens that helps us remain aware of the theoretical fallacies of psychoanalysis as a thorough and systematic anatomy of post-colonial subjectivities.

I would now like to investigate the Marxist appropriation of psychoanalysis that takes place in cold-war American culture, from a Jewish refugee from German Nazism, Herbert Marcuse. I will investigate what happens when a Marxist intellectual fails to come up with an adequate understanding of how the colonial milieu contributes to individual psychology. Given the decolonising and feminist movements that were developing one after the other in the late 1960s in the United States, Marcuse's insistence that it is (male) sexuality that is the main site of capitalistic oppression indicates a startling omission. Firstly, I discuss Marcuse's theory of repression of sexuality as what he sees as the only pitfall of capitalist life. As we have seen previously, otherness within the psychoanalytic subject is defined through the racialised and sexualised imagery of the cannibal trope. I show that because Marcuse emphasises social repression as entirely dominating the individual, his account of the subject lacks such an inherent otherness. Drawing from psychoanalytic criticisms of Marcuse, it appears that his psychoanalytic subject is not structured upon an inner dynamic tension, but

it is entirely constructed through social, capitalist power. Furthermore, because Marcuse unwittingly considers capitalism as synonymous with patriarchy, I argue that he externalises the necessary psychoanalytic split onto the role of woman, and in particular the mother. For Marcuse, the mother becomes the threatening and alluring other that defines the (male) subject. Overall, I argue that the absence of the cannibal trope in Marcuse's theory becomes profoundly connected to the vision of otherness as feminised and racialised. In the white male imaginary, the mother becomes a substitute for the cannibal trope.

7.1.2 Eros and Civilisation: a Marxist Rereading of Psychoanalysis

To appraise Marcuse's project, I first situate his work historically. The historian Eli Zaretsky noted that the 1950s in the United States was a transitional period for society and psychoanalysis, too.¹ Psychoanalytic thinkers and practitioners were divided between pessimism and despair, following the totalitarian politics of the 1940s, and efforts to imagine radical alternatives by resituating revolutionary Marxist ideas at the heart of the capitalist societies.² In post-war America, psychoanalysis underwent examination by analysts who defined themselves as neo-Freudians and developed the tradition of ego psychology by rejecting some of Freud's fundamental assumptions such as the centrality of sexuality and drive theory. Neo-Freudians like Karen Horney and Erich Fromm strongly opposed the idea that drives were biologically determined forces immanent in human nature, or that they emerged out of 'unalterable situations' related to biological development.³ On the other hand, libertarian Marxists such as Herbert Marcuse and Norman Brown deployed psychoanalysis towards a subversive and non-conservative direction by arguing the need to review Freudian theory without being 'eclectic' or 'minimising the extent and depth of [psychological] conflict,' as the neo-Freudians did.⁴ As Frosh has outlined, the fundamental difference between these two polemical traditions boils down to the question of aggression and negativity within the subject.⁵ Whilst the former group imagines the individual as good and pure, corrupted by culture, the latter

¹ Eli Zaretsky, "Charisma or Rationalization? Domesticity and Psychoanalysis in the United States in the 1950s," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2000): 328–54.

² Zaretsky.

³ Dagmar Herzog, *Cold War Freud: Psychoanalysis in an Age of Catastrophes* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 26.

⁴ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 251.

⁵ Stephen Frosh, *The Politics of Psychoanalysis*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1999), 179.

sustains the psychoanalytic pessimism about inherent negativity, and devises ways to negotiate oppression by keeping an eye on social transformation and the ways in which society could mitigate the individual's suffering.

Marcuse was preoccupied precisely with the part of psychoanalysis that Freudian scholars considered the most problematic as it installed within the subject disastrous, deadly, and destructive drives. In Freud's drive theory, Marcuse found an opportunity to explain why, despite the claims of progress in contemporary civilisation, misery, destruction, and psychological discomfort was looming all around. Marcuse argued that, according to Freud, civilisation was an effort to master and control sexuality because it was an inherently subversive force and could endanger the collective.⁶ If left unregulated, the life and death drives—or as they became known in post-Freudian thought *Eros* and *Thanatos*—are equally damaging. Without repression, there is no cultural progress because instincts seek immediate gratification in accordance with what Freud called the pleasure principle. Within the Western culture, children had to become educated in delaying and repressing their gratification by adjusting themselves to the reality principle, the impossibility of receiving instant gratification. According to Marcuse, the transition from pleasure to reality reveals that 'civilization has progressed as organized *domination*,' because individuals learn to forgo their wishes.⁷ However, this negation of instincts does not imply their disappearance. Instead, instincts continue 'to exist in civilization itself.'⁸ Becoming cultured is not a simple process of the 'adjustment of pleasure' to the reality of societal norms but it is equally the 'subjugation and diversion of the destructive force of instinctual gratification' as a sacrifice which becomes meaningful through claims of the 'transubstantiation of pleasure itself.'⁹ The human being becomes a rational, conscious being by learning to delay and repress the gratification of the instincts. Marcuse's objection was that in the current historical circumstances this repression was unnecessarily excessive.

Upon a closer observation on Freud's articulation of the reality principle, Marcuse reaches the following generalisation: the reality principle is informed by need or scarcity. The distribution of scarcity is '*imposed* upon individuals—

⁶ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 15.

⁷ Marcuse, 34. Emphasis in the original.

⁸ Marcuse, 15.

⁹ Marcuse, 13.

first by mere violence, subsequently by a more rational utilisation of power.’¹⁰ In other words, there is more than one form of repression, depending on how social institutions and laws impose their domination, i.e. what he called ‘surplus repression’ as opposed to ‘basic repression.’¹¹ Similarly, the reality principle also depends on particular historical and political formations. Marcuse argues that contemporary capitalist society is organised in accordance with the ‘performance principle’: a ‘specific reality principle’ under whose ‘rule society is stratified according to the competitive economic performances of its members.’¹² Under the performance principle, instead of seeking satisfaction through labour, individuals work in alienation: ‘[L]abor time [...] is painful time, for alienated labor is absence of gratification, negation of the pleasure principle.’¹³ Remarkably, while the repressed libido cannot be channelled into work, it cannot be invested in leisure time, either, that is, ‘the late stage of industrial civilization [...] has the technique of mass manipulation’ by ‘an entertainment industry which directly controls leisure time. The individual is not to be left alone.’¹⁴ Marcuse’s pessimism was profound: within a culture that boasts about its progress and freedom, repression is unreasonably excessive, and historical reality is dominated by the pressure to be productive and useful. Not only are modern subjects incapable of receiving any form of libidinal gratification from their labour but also, even in their leisure time, they are left with no option but to consume the products of the entertainment industry. In this direction, if surplus repression corrodes the modern subject by creating the conditions of alienated labour, how did Marcuse envision social transformation? What is the space whereby one is able to voice opposition to the performance principle and reclaim one’s right to a more fulfilling life?

Marcuse saw sexuality as a life-enhancing form of energy that holds the potential of reversing the lethargy capitalistic domination imposed. He diagnosed that ‘the sex instincts bear the brunt of the reality principle.’¹⁵ Under the performance principle, sexuality appears compartmentalised and partial, and, is reduced to genitality and procreation. The institution of monogamy channels and regulates libidinal energy in such a way that it becomes productive—‘it is turned into

¹⁰ Marcuse, 36. Emphasis in the original.

¹¹ Marcuse, 37.

¹² Marcuse, 44.

¹³ Marcuse, 45.

¹⁴ Marcuse, 48.

¹⁵ Marcuse, 40.

a specialized temporary function, into a means for an end.¹⁶ On the other hand, non-procreative sexuality was labelled as perversion, exemplifying those practices which, in being excluded from the heteronormative practices of private life, defined it. 'Against a society which employs sexuality as means for a useful end, the perversions uphold sexuality as an end in itself; they thus place themselves outside the dominion of the performance principle and challenge its foundation.'¹⁷ When talking about perversion Marcuse refers to Freud's articulation of sexuality as 'polymorphously perverse,' namely as a free-floating energy not yet concentrated onto genitality. However, Marcuse does not suggest that all sexuality must become non-procreative because this signifies a withdrawal from the creation of life and marks 'the submission of Eros to the death instinct.'¹⁸ But, he was interested in how the compartmentalisation of sexuality could be reversed and undone.

In adopting a Marxist framework, Marcuse determined the performance principle as one which is governed by the capitalist, modern values of utility and productivity.¹⁹ Just as sexuality was governed by the injunction of productivity—sustain a heteronormative family and encourage procreation—labour and leisure time were also dictated by the injunction to use one's libidinal energy at the service of collective progress. 'Efficiency and repression converge: raising the productivity of labor is the sacrosanct ideal of both capitalist and Stalinist Stakhanovism.'²⁰ In the post-industrial world, the subject is plagued by these values since productivity was more and more placed as the opposite of pleasure, thus enhancing the individual repression. Productivity became associated with utility and effectiveness and was dissociated from practices that do not result in end products, like homosexuality or 'rest, indulgence, receptivity.'²¹ However, seen from another angle, productivity could also engender the terms for its own collapse and carry the possibility of creating conditions that militate 'against the subjugation of man to his labor.'²² Marcuse found this opportunity in technology and automation: whilst labour can never entail freedom as it involves a physical presence and activity, yet, 'it can release time and energy for the free play of

¹⁶ Marcuse, 41.

¹⁷ Marcuse, 50.

¹⁸ Marcuse, 51.

¹⁹ Marcuse, 155.

²⁰ Marcuse, 156.

²¹ Marcuse, 156.

²² Marcuse, 156.

human faculties *outside* the realm of alienated labor.²³ If technology could be deployed at the service of society, then it would assume the burden of producing material goods; individuals would not have to outweigh their performance to become more efficient. '[F]reed from this enslavement, productivity loses its repressive power.'²⁴ As a result, individuals would have more time away from paid employment to cultivate their creativity and enjoy private leisure time. Productivity could become displaced from the field of economic exploitation to the service of imagination, art, and aesthetic practices. Extended beyond the institutions of exploitation, productivity would lose its capacity to repress the individual and impel a change that would libidinally re-energise the oppressed subject. 'The struggle for existence then proceeds on new grounds and with new objectives: it turns into the concerted struggle against any constraint on the free play of human faculties, against toil, disease and death.'²⁵ Tempting as its sounds, Marcuse's political thesis was mischievously romantic as he did not seem to consider, for example, the possibility of mass numbers of unemployment resulting from the technological takeover of production.

Nevertheless, Marcuse's strategy for social transformation necessarily involved a reconfiguration of the subject's relation to its body and sexuality. For Marcuse, it was only through an alleviation of repression that the experience of alienation invoked by economic exploitation could re-sexualise the compartmentalised body. Once sexuality was freed from social injunctions and regained its polymorphous status, the forces of Eros would equally augment and counterbalance the forces of death. The calls for sexual liberation as the only opportunity to foster connections in the social web sat in stark contrast with Freud's diagnosis about the need to impose sexual restrictions on individual libido—which once left unrestricted would hamper the progress of civilisation.²⁶ While Freud recognised that individual misery was caused by the internalisation of too much guilt and prohibition, resulting in the super-ego weighing on the subject, Marcuse regarded oppression as entirely emanating from the outside, ignoring how it becomes internalised. Marcuse's subject is not plagued by its own conscience or super-ego. Thus, he proposed that only through lifting the social restraints of sexuality would the liberation from the values of capitalist

²³ Marcuse, 156.

²⁴ Marcuse, 156.

²⁵ Marcuse, 157.

²⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), trans. David McLintonck (London: Penguin Books, 2002).

oppression be achieved. Hence, where Freud's project makes a claim for an individual responsibility and ethics, Marcuse displaces individual responsibility with the collective one: it is not the individual's obligation to manage psychic tensions, but it is the aim of a politically revolutionary project to alleviate social repression and to emancipate sexuality. Misery, unhappiness and discontent with civilisation for Marcuse belong only to the sphere of politics.

Furthermore, Marcuse's emphasis on the social dimension of the excessive repression of sexuality lies in tension with the main point of psychoanalysis about the subject's agency as emerging against the psychic exteriority that is the unconscious. This is because for Marcuse repression becomes overwhelming. Marcuse overlooks the psychoanalytic claim that psychic life is ordered by its own laws, not exclusively submitted to the social. His theory has 'no aspect of psychic life escaping the total penetration of cultural domination.'²⁷ The result is that Marcuse's insights divest Freudian psychoanalysis from its fundamental ambivalence. Instead, 'human agency is reduced to domination, while the repressed unconscious is linked to emancipation.'²⁸ Additionally, Marcuse sees 'modern man' as undersexualised as a side-effect of capitalist reality: '[M]an exists only *part-time*, during the working days, as an alienated instrument of alienated performance.'²⁹ Yet, he does not acknowledge how this impacts on individual (male) psychology. Marcuse's theory, then, cannot reconcile the social with the psychic, exposing their inherent links. For example, while Fanon explores how white sexual and racialised fantasies construe the colonised subject, Marcuse's view of sexuality signifies a bodily energy that once submitted to social regulation, enslaves the subject altogether. In neglecting how sexuality informs psychic conflict Marcuse is led to theorise this split externally. In the next section I will show how in eliding capitalism with patriarchy, Marcuse displaces the inherent otherness within the subject externally, exchanging one form of domination (the division of labour) with another (gendered inequality).

7.2 Universalising Alienation, Colonising Diversity: Marcuse, Race, Gender and the Postcolonial

In *Eros and Civilization*, repression is regarded as an inherent property of

²⁷ Anthony Elliott, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 51.

²⁸ Elliott, 51.

²⁹ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 47.

civilisation with its own anthropological and historical genealogy. Following Freud, Marcuse considers that society is troubled by the same ‘archaic mental immaturity’ as exemplified by the primal horde hypothesis.³⁰ Marcuse seeks to establish a link between individual processes of repression and repression enforced by institutions that sustain contemporary post-industrial societies. He argues that individual psychology and social repression are effectively underpinned by the same structures because it is impossible to isolate the individual from its position in the historical trajectory of humanity: ‘individual psychology is thus *in itself* group psychology in so far as the individual itself still is in archaic identity with the species.’³¹ For Marcuse, there is a historical continuity between early forms of paternal domination which provide the foundation for the ‘mature ego of the civilized personality’ by preserving ‘the archaic heritage of man.’³² This is because in preventing the prehistoric band of brothers from having sexual relations with his wives and daughters, the primal father was the first figure to impose the reality principle over the pleasure principle. Marcuse translates Freud’s myth of the primal horde as a struggle between the reinstatement of tyrannical fathers—a ruling group that achieves a ‘lasting satisfaction of their needs [...] by repeating, in a new form, the order of domination which had controlled pleasure’—and rebellious sons who wish the removal of the patriarch.³³

As Robinson explains, Marcuse transforms Freud’s primal myth into a kind of ‘capitalist allegory’ where the sons symbolise the unsuccessful proletarian revolution. Their guilt is not, as in Freud, a result of their ambivalence for the father, but their betrayal to the revolutionary project by perpetuating the father’s morality.³⁴ The power of the primal father has been substituted by ‘duly constituted authority’ and therefore, his supplanting would not endanger the order and values of civilisation because the latter are being safeguarded by institutions.³⁵ What Marcuse describes as the transition from the paternal ‘despotic monopoly’ into contemporary structures of impersonal domination and to the ‘various agencies and agents which teach the son to become a mature and restrained

³⁰ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 60.

³¹ Marcuse, 56.

³² Marcuse, 58.

³³ Marcuse, 64.

³⁴ Paul A. Robinson, *The Sexual Radicals: Reich, Róheim, Marcuse* (London: Granada Publishing Limited, 1972), 156.

³⁵ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 77.

member of his society;³⁶ misses Freud's point about the internalisation of the paternal prohibition of incest and cannibalism that institutes the split within the subject. Therefore, the psychological preservation of paternal power in the subject's unconscious structures and fantasies becomes, in Marcuse's rereading of the myth, preserved externally. It becomes a patriarchal form of domination. In other words, the capability of contemporary patriarchal institutions to regulate sexuality is determined by a historical memory: the capacity of the primal father to establish his domination by controlling and regulating the sons' sexuality, and the sons' willingness to give away some of their instinctual wishes for the sake of patriarchy's perpetuation. Ultimately, Marcuse argues that 'the transformation of the pleasure principle into the performance principle, which changes the despotic monopoly of the father into restrained educational and economic authority, also changes the original object of the struggle: the mother.'³⁷

This final point seems crucial in unpacking how Marcuse's psychoanalytic theory of social emancipation is implicitly dependent on a gendered and raced otherness. For Marcuse, the Oedipal situation is a psychological reproduction of the scenario of the primal myth, with one difference: while the father is substituted by the son, his power triumphs. Thus, where Freud sees the primal myth as instituting a foundational form of guilt within the subject, Marcuse disregards this splitting and instead argues that the Oedipus situation actually assures the son's 'ability to take the father's place.'³⁸ Marcuse sees the identification between the son and the father as dependent on capitalist structures. It is the financial compensation that allows him to acquire the father's place: 'the institution of inheritable private property, and the universalization of labor, give the son a justified expectancy of his own sanctioned pleasure in accordance with his socially useful performances.'³⁹ Thus 'the son leaves the patriarchal family and sets out to become a father and boss himself.'⁴⁰

Significantly, although Marcuse makes the ambivalence towards the father disappear, the same does not hold true for the son's attitude towards the wife—a dimension that we do not see in Freud's reading. In the primal myth, Marcuse argues the primal mother represents the undifferentiated nature of the instincts;

³⁶ Marcuse, 75.

³⁷ Marcuse, 75–76.

³⁸ Marcuse, 75.

³⁹ Marcuse, 75.

⁴⁰ Marcuse, 75.

she is 'Eros and Thanatos in immediate, natural union.'⁴¹ The mother is the desired object of the son's wish, which is also a narcissistic wish since the return to her is a return to 'integral peace [...], the absence of all need and desire.'⁴² Because the mother becomes the object of prohibition, the son's sexual objects becomes split. 'Mother and wife were separated, and the fatal identity of Eros and Thanatos was thus dissolved.'⁴³ However, what his argument exposes is that the separation does not occur between the mother and the wife, but between sexual love and affection. '[S]exuality and affection are divorced; only later they are to meet again in the love to the wife which is sensual as well as tender [...]'.⁴⁴ Marcuse's distinction between the Life and Death instincts with love and sexuality respectively, falls apart. His argument could have been that patriarchal society creates a split between sexual and affectionate love that allows the son to be affectionate with the mother without transgressing a taboo, and to seek a sexual partner. But he ends up implying that while the life instinct becomes split (so that the son can be both affectionate towards the wife and express his sexual wishes) the death instinct remains attached to the mother. Therefore, while the figure of the primal father becomes perpetuated through patriarchal power, the figure of the primal mother remains confined in representing death.

Perhaps the taboo on incest was the first great protection against the death instinct: the taboo on Nirvana, on the regressive impulse for peace which stood in the way of progress, of Life itself.⁴⁵

The point here is that Marcuse's theory depends on the representation of the mother as a symbol of a deadly union: the desire to return to her is strong because the maternal union promises relief from ambivalence and conflict (hence narcissism). The maternal object is also fearful since, in the patriarchal imaginary, she represents the collapse of boundaries and the demolition of independence. The mother, thus, becomes the necessary excess that unwittingly structures male subjectivity. Marcuse's anti-capitalistic pontification thus seems to reflect what feminist critics have stressed, for decades, about the patriarchal problem of the mother as a deadly excess. As Jacqueline Rose put it: 'The message, spoken and unspoken is clear: we will not take care of you, or allow you to take care of yourself, because part of us wants you out of here, or dead. The visceral

⁴¹ Marcuse, 76.

⁴² Marcuse, 76.

⁴³ Marcuse, 76.

⁴⁴ Marcuse, 76.

⁴⁵ Marcuse, 76.

fact of motherhood, the *fons et origo* of our being in the world, is an affront to normal—meaning, free of mothers and babies—life.⁴⁶

To better illustrate this point, I argue we need to turn to one of the most significant adaptations of Marcuse's argument by his contemporary and cordial friend Norman O. Brown in a book published in 1959 called *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*.⁴⁷ To be precise, where Brown's analysis significantly differs from Marcuse's is in arguing that Eros is 'a desire for union (being one) with objects in the world.'⁴⁸ Brown sees a way out of contemporary oppression by thinking about a state of 'post-ambivalence,' in other words, the achievement of instinctual reconciliation without regressing to an early stage where these instincts were undifferentiated—as in a union with the mother. For Brown, psychoanalysis demonstrates that 'mankind will not cease from discontent and sickness until the antinomy of economics and love, work and play, is overcome.'⁴⁹ Providing a more careful unpacking of the nature of drives and their regulation through culture than Marcuse, Brown argues that ambivalence is not inherent but it becomes the 'distinctive achievement to break apart the undifferentiated or dialectical unity of the instincts at the animal level.'⁵⁰ If there is no necessary antithesis between the drives, then it is the task of human culture to contain the death instincts within those of the life. Brown recognised a 'repression of death,' as a cultural tendency to avoid death that indicated an incapacity to learn how to grow old, to lose and to die.⁵¹ 'Man who is born of a woman and destined to die, is a body, with bodily instincts. Only if Eros—the life instinct—can affirm the life of the body can the death instinct affirm death, and in affirming death magnify life.'⁵²

It is remarkable that Brown's argument enters such pessimist terrains so as to call for an embracement of a death culture, as the necessary existential horizon that could uplift the individual and 'magnify life.'⁵³ At the same time, in Brown's

⁴⁶ Jacqueline Rose, *Mothers: An Essay on Love and Cruelty* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2018), 26.

⁴⁷ Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*, 2nd ed. (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1985).

⁴⁸ Brown, 44.

⁴⁹ Brown, 53.

⁵⁰ Brown, 84.

⁵¹ Brown, 103–9.

⁵² Brown, 109.

⁵³ Brown, 109.

analysis, the mother becomes the par excellence figure of death and the source of all psychic conflict for the individual. Echoing Róheim—whom he references frequently—Brown invites us to consider the possibility that patriarchal cultural structures are established to compensate for the separation from the mother. Separating from the mother is, in Brown's psychological analysis, a process of achieving 'individuality, independence and separateness.'⁵⁴ Only by figuring out a way to remaining differentiated from the mother yet fundamentally connected to her—what Brown frames as the 'post-ambivalence' state—does it become possible to contain the violence of separation. Brown, therefore, makes a significant counter-argument to Marcuse's portrayal of motherhood, by outlining that Marcuse's patriarchal framework is built on the repression of the mother.

These two works allow us to grasp how although the cannibal trope is not deployed as the matrix of otherness, yet, the mother becomes the symbol of undifferentiated unity that swallows and engulfs the subject. That is to say, Marcuse's distinction between femininity and motherhood can be understood on the basis of racial difference: the mother as a threatening and desirable figure, as the symbol of death resembles the fantasies surrounding the other as a cannibal. Although Marcuse was a marginal and radical Marxist thinker writing from a place of exteriority of mainstream culture and convincingly condemning capitalist structures as draining the individual, he uncritically reiterated patriarchal views that perpetuate the objectification of female subjectivity. His example points out that even if psychoanalytic critiques are produced from the margins they are far from free of sexist and racist implications.

Overall, Marcuse's work presents important applications of the psychoanalytic canon for the deepening of a cultural and political anatomy of oppression. In situating the individual experience in a capitalistic system, Marcuse creates the opportunity of opening psychoanalysis to interrogation against specific power structures such as the division of labour and transforming Freudian psychoanalysis into a psychological explanation of how sexual repression is not simply a drawback of capitalism, but, actively sustains capitalist domination. However, because Marcuse considers sexual difference as presenting an external split for the (male) subject, and not a psychological one, his project depends on the patriarchal oppression of women and the confinement of the mother in a

⁵⁴ Brown, 109.

place of taboo and death. In the 1950s American society, it seems quite unlikely that sexual and gendered difference was the sole source of oppression, given the African-American civil rights movements that combated racial segregation and discrimination in the years that followed. However, Marcuse's recognition of sexuality as the only site of capitalist oppression can be read, as Daniel Boyarin suggests, in the context of a 'desperate attempt on the part of European Jewish refugees to escape the postcolonial subject position.'⁵⁵ A post-colonial, feminist lens to psychoanalysis, then, is exigent not only to acknowledge the discipline's historical affinities with colonialism, but also to maintain the radical openness, frictions, tensions and splits of the psychoanalytic subject open for alternative political possibilities.

7.3 Psychoanalysis as Post-Colonial Critique

So far, I have examined in four separate case studies how psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic thinkers until the late 1950s have dealt with the question of the cannibal trope. My main aim has been, on the one hand, to investigate why and how these thinkers engaged with the colonial smear of cannibalism, while on the other hand, to explore the implications of this uneasy engagement for their psychoanalytic theorisations of subjectivity. Although, I have also tried to point towards the ways by which the deployment of the cannibal trope has efficiently contributed to the deconstruction of the European self as coherent, rational, civilised, and white; in this final section, I want to evaluate more generally what these individual cases have to offer in discussions about using psychoanalysis as a political and social critique. More precisely, given that psychoanalysis has both *perpetuated* the imagery of the other as the cannibal and interestingly *reversed* the view of other as cannibal by arguing that it is the European, bourgeois psychoanalysable subject which has cannibalistic wishes: what does this particular hidden trajectory say about psychoanalysis as a post-colonial analytic tool?

This thesis starts with an outline of how the colonial enterprise has systematically produced images and mythologies of the colonised as cannibalistic. Following the representation of cannibals in cultural artefacts from the Middle Ages to modernity, my aim has been to show that the monstrosity of the colonised has

⁵⁵ Daniel Boyarin, "Homophobia and the Postcoloniality of the 'Jewish Science,'" in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, ed. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 188.

been not only part of the discourse of bourgeois, middle-class civility as other forms of racial representation. But, once we move beyond the apparent ahistoricity of the cannibal and follow this figure into the realm of fantasy, an added layer of understanding emerges. The cannibal does not merely stand in stark opposition to a bourgeois whiteness but also it brings to light particular aspects, desires, and fears of the coloniser's unconscious. For example, as Shakespeare's Prospero and Caliban dyad in *The Tempest* indicates, the assumption of the inferiority of the colonised is an immanent aspect of the European subject who is also constituted through colonialism. Additionally, in focusing on cannibalistic fantasies in the context of anti-Semitism, I have sought to assert that post-colonial studies often neglects full consideration of its racial dimension. The cannibal trope cannot be considered as a formulation aimed solely at the colonised people of colour in the Southern hemisphere colonies, but it was very much part of European modernity as well, as directed at Europe's 'inner demons,' as Norman Cohn has shown.⁵⁶ This is not to imply that the Jewish communities within the European Empires were colonised in the same way as the Australian Aborigines were, but to highlight a similar theme of relish and repulsion, loathing, and desire surrounding those social groups which were socially marginalised. In focusing strongly on the interconnection between colonial racism and anti-Semitism, my aim is to historicise the cannibal trope as the fantasy par excellence accompanying the foreign other.

The history of cannibalism reminds us that the imagery of a destructive appetite has been pertinent in the context of capitalist exploitation as well, as Karl Marx's critique demonstrates. Conservative anthropologists were so intent on manifesting their greed for profit that they embraced the idea of cannibalism as a bourgeois bravado intended to intimidate. Eventually, cannibalism became an ingredient of the institutional history of anthropology and haunted anthropology until the late 1970s when critics meticulously reviewed the ways through which cannibalism had been constructed and sustained as a part of the mythology accompanying dehumanisation and colonisation. The implications of this colonial mapping for post-colonial studies is that the cannibal trope was far from a marginal imagery. Credibly, or not so for Europeans, the cannibal trope has popularly accompanied the social and cultural processes that have constructed the colonised as a sexualised and monstrous sub-human figure.

⁵⁶ Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom*, 2nd ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Secondly, this mapping makes clear that, despite its anti-capitalist appropriation, the cannibal trope is a profoundly racist and conservative imagery. This adds to the already existing discomfort between psychoanalysis and post-colonial studies. The cannibal becomes enlisted alongside the figure of the primitive and the metaphor of the 'dark continent' for female sexuality among those features that render the representation of non-Western civilisations in psychoanalysis problematic. Finally, after the history of the cannibal trope as outlined in the first chapter, it should not be possible to consider colonial history without this figure whose trajectory and genealogy inevitably feeds into psychoanalysis, and can be explored only once psychoanalysis is considered as a discipline emerging within the colonial context.

Freud seemed the obvious place to start investigating how this particular aspect of colonial history entered psychoanalysis, not merely because he was the originator of psychoanalysis, but because in his work on *Totem and Taboo* Freud interrogated the taboo on cannibalism. Despite psychoanalysis' focus on individuality, Freud's *Totem and Taboo* sets an important precedent for works thinking about how psychoanalysis has engaged with the non-European. Firstly, drawing on colonial anthropology Freud submitted psychoanalysis to a tradition that represented the Australian Aboriginal in a way that pathologises him. However, when taking into consideration that Freud was writing in response to Jung's psychoanalytic theory and implicit anti-Semitism, it appears that Freud's turn to the fantasy of humanity's prehistory acquires a different meaning. In *Totem and Taboo*, the role of the primal horde as a fantasy of origins, and as an explanation of how the taboo on cannibalism has become socially established, has a double function. On the one hand, it aims at universalising the nature of unconscious wishes and conflicts. On the other hand, it becomes an attack on anti-Semitism within the institutional origins of psychoanalysis. While Freud exhibits a desperation to impose on the constructed figure of the primitive a cannibalistic tendency, he is mostly concerned with recognising a shared savagery repressed in the unconscious structures of both Europeans and non-Europeans.

This juxtaposition presents one of the several thorny points of contact between psychoanalysis and post-colonial theory. It begs the question of whether by comparing the unconscious structures of the Australian Aborigines and the European bourgeoisie psychoanalysis is presented as a form of 'liberal

colonialism,' as post-colonial critics have argued.⁵⁷ Assuming that the colonised subject shares the same unconscious struggles as the coloniser is an act of psychological equality, which, however at the same time transforms the colonised into a psychoanalytic and a psychoanalysable subject, preparing the ground for the appropriation of the indigenous in the globalised national citizenship. Thus, psychoanalysis advances a particular model of subjectivity that is premised upon an excess that is claimed to be universal—an imaginary prehistoric outside where humans lived in a state of nature.⁵⁸ Freud, just as Klein, seems to consider cannibalism within a psychoanalytic excess which relates to the origins of the subject and of humanity. While, for Freud, cannibalism is the unconscious of the social that informs the history of humanity, it is the psychic reality of the infant that forms a precipitate of guilt and anxiety in the unconscious for Klein. Additionally, their emphasis on bodily drives creates a similar exteriority that is not historical but biological.⁵⁹ For example, one could argue that Klein's emphasis on the death drive as the container of an immanent cannibalistic tendency is a form of an excess that is unrelated to culture, and which needs to be left behind for subjectivity proper—civilised, reparative, ordinarily depressed—to emerge. As Klein after him, Freud did not write about the colonised subject, but used the fantasy of a primitive and cannibalistic exteriority to describe the European bourgeois subject. It is because their theories depend on this exteriority that the representation of the colonised subject becomes a problem which neither of them can solve.

Nevertheless, to see their developmental accounts as discourses in which the subject harmoniously progresses by leaving something distasteful behind would be to miss the point of their contribution in the question of cannibalism, and as a result, to miss a politically poignant issue buried in the troublesome historical engagement of psychoanalysis and colonialism. For example, Freud argues that the European coloniser is no less cannibalistic than the Aborigines. This juxtaposition is neither on the basis of a biological similarity nor of a cultural

⁵⁷ Warwick Anderson, Deborah Jenson, and Richard C. Keller, *Unconscious Dominions: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma, and Global Sovereignties* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

⁵⁸ This term is used here echoing Thomas Hobbes' definition of the pre-state living conditions. Hobbes believed that the emergence of the state puts an end to an anarchic form of collective life where man's aggression presents a threat to other men. By conveying their sovereignty into the state, which regulates, punishes and imposes the law, men could also achieve protection from one another. Hobbes' theory is considered the foundation of theories of liberal statehood. Please see: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁵⁹ Frosh, *The Politics of Psychoanalysis*.

one, but psychological. For Freud, Christianity, like other totemic religions has failed to successfully repress humanity's cannibalistic past and depends on forgiveness and redemption from the ritual of collective partaking. Freud makes it impossible to consider that cultural and religious structures leave the subject unaltered, and at the same time he makes it hard to sustain the colonial dichotomy between racialised black and white subjects, once seen from a psychological point of view, this distinction is made to fall apart.

Similarly, in Klein's developmental account any attempt at achieving the racialised position of whiteness is disrupted by the immense destructiveness of the unconscious forces with which she has equipped subjectivity. But where Klein's theory becomes more interesting, and perhaps more relevant for post-colonial studies, is in her accounts of gendered subjectivity. Klein on the one hand, theorises a colonial white male subject as one that becomes an impossibility or a utopian fantasy. On the other hand, Klein's idealism is juxtaposed with a misogyny demonstrated in her theorisation of the female subject who, caught in a developmental threshold, is constantly undone by her own cannibalistic wishes. Klein's theory unwittingly shows that it is impossible to construct an account of the psychoanalytic subject without it being undone by the radical contradictions and dichotomies that dominated the world of colonial Britain. Her theory exemplifies how within a colonial framework theorising a coherent subject that can repair—such as the hegemonic white male—results in idealism and normativity. Conceptualising a vulnerable and constantly undone subject results in pathology and sexism. After Klein's psychoanalysis, one could go as far as to argue that it becomes impossible to consider social change without being aware of how the inherent contradictions and incompatibility of colonial dichotomies, translated in the subject's psychology, actually foreclose any possibility to think beyond them. In a sense, Klein's failure to theorise a psychoanalytic subject without avoiding idealism or pathology should become acknowledged as the limitation of colonial psychic realities.

Unlike Freud and Klein, Róheim came in direct contact with so-called cannibals and tried to apply the psychoanalytic theory of the subject to the Australian Aborigines. Indeed, Róheim's work seems to directly address the question of possibility for psychoanalysis to become of any use in non-European contexts, given its claims to universality. Róheim's work is particularly interesting with regards to his treatment of aboriginal cannibalism. Contrary to anthropologists

of his time, Róheim, although he subscribed to the mythology of aboriginal mothers as cannibals, nevertheless did not regard it as a side-effect of racial difference but as a symptom of the mother's difficulty in separating from her baby. Thought this way, Róheim's explanation of maternal cannibalism could even be regarded as a humanising explanation and a normalisation of maternal anxieties, if this was not accompanied by a profound blindness and neglect towards the colonial living conditions of extreme deprivation and humiliation. To put it differently, through his psychoanalytic education Róheim was not immediately judgmental about aboriginal women as his contemporary anthropologists and psychologists in the area were. Paradoxically, he used the wider frame of ethics and norms that psychoanalysis possesses and explained why these women might eat their babies instead of a priori dehumanising them. However, Róheim's non-judgmental disposition is both sympathetic and borderline problematic because it is politically uncritical. While Róheim's theory could genuinely open a debate about what exactly is wrong with the cannibalistic practices of the colonised—if not that this is a constructed imagery, a form of colonial propaganda, on behalf of the coloniser—by failing to extend his focus onto the colonial context, he presents psychoanalysis as complicit in the reproduction of the imagery of cannibalism. Only that this time the colonial imagery of aboriginal cannibalism is considered to be rooted in the black mother's unconscious as well. Like Freud and Klein, Róheim's ideas are based upon the necessity to expel or project cannibalism upon an exteriority—in this case the aboriginal woman which does not become theorised in her own terms. However, Róheim also insists that we should not fail to acknowledge that it is the separation from the mother that profoundly shapes not only the subject, but the culture too. It is psychoanalysis' task to highlight that Western culture depends on the repression of the vital role of the mother and as a result it informs masculinity and aggression as well. Ironically, Róheim fails to acknowledge how his own theory does the same to the mother of colour.

What runs through all these three cases is on the one hand the silencing and racialisation of white women and women of colour, and on the other hand, a radical challenge on the one who has the monopoly of savagery and cannibalism. If as Mrinalini Greedharry puts it 'the aim of postcolonial critique is to understand how colonizers attempted to secure their authority through their representations of the colonized and how their efforts always failed to function

perfectly,⁶⁰ psychoanalysis can take us towards this direction: colonialism—and by extension, psychoanalysis as a colonial discourse—was secured by exclusions from the psychoanalytic hegemonic discourse of figures and spaces feminised and racialised (as in Freud's primal horde, Klein's pre-Oedipal cannibalistic, and Róheim's aboriginal mothers) and on the other hand, these exclusions failed to function properly because psychoanalysis claimed them to be a part of individual, social, and cultural histories. In other words, psychoanalysis as a social critique is particularly useful when it attributes to the hegemonic colonising subject what appears otherwise entirely disconnected and accordingly irrelevant from it.

Nevertheless, it is not until Frantz Fanon's rereading of psychoanalysis that the possibility fully arises of using it for analysing the colonial situation despite its racist libel. More precisely, Fanon reads cannibalism not as a natural, instinctual inclination of the hegemonic subject, but as a racialised phobia of the coloniser. In doing so, Fanon has enriched the psychoanalytic understanding of colonial racism from drive to desire—from the claim that the hegemonic colonial subject is undermined by cannibalistic wishes to the claim that the coloniser's desire is to eat the colonised. In other words, Fanon moves psychoanalysis away from a drive theory into a theory based on the recognition of how it is impossible to explain psychological phenomena without taking into consideration the impact of the social world.⁶¹ Hence, Fanon showed that the Oedipus complex cannot account for racialised phobias, precisely because it does not account for racial difference. Fanon explained that latent homosexual feelings towards the white father repressed in colonial, hegemonic culture seek expression in the objectifying representations of the black man as a cannibal.

In Fanon's hands, psychoanalysis becomes a significant tool for analysing the material effects of racism but also a profoundly elliptical discourse which alongside colonialism makes no room for theorising the colonised in their own terms. More crucially, Fanon shows that the subject of colour does not share the same degree of alienation as the white subject. He argues that, on the one hand, there is the fundamental alienation that is created by having an unconscious mind, and on the other hand, there is a socially imposed form of alienation that is caused by having a body embedded in a racist culture. By introducing the body as a threshold between psychic, internal space, and external social contact, Fanon

⁶⁰ Mrinalini Greedharry, *Postcolonial Theory and Psychoanalysis: From Uneasy Engagements to Effective Critique* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 141.

⁶¹ Fuss, *Identification Papers*, 165.

has invited us to think that it is impossible for psychoanalysis to claim a critical perspective without acknowledging how domination succeeds because one has a body. Through Fanon, the relationship between psychoanalytic and post-colonial theory is initiated as one of disjuncture or aporia: psychoanalysis emphasises interiority, post-colonial theory invites us to think about the role of the body. Besides, it has erased the psychological mark of racial difference and has produced subtle racialising developmental accounts. Furthermore, psychoanalysis has endorsed the view that cannibals have existed among the colonised cultures and in humanity's prehistory, and it has also situated cannibalism as a constitutional wish of the white bourgeois subject. It is this tension 'adroitly performing its double act as colonial legacy and postcolonial critique,'⁶² this impossibility to pin psychoanalysis into a particular political discourse that is perhaps its most important contribution. Instead of trying to avoid this, I have aimed at keeping it alive. This should not be translated as an avoidance over choosing a side—namely on whether the cannibal trope eventually produces a narrative about psychoanalysis as a conservative or radical discipline. Rather, it should point to how psychoanalysis offers a different historical paradigm for the kind of social critique a marginal discipline can offer.

7.4 On Limits and Limitations

7.4.1 Method

Throughout this thesis, my aim has been to explore the ambivalent engagements of psychoanalysis with questions of 'race' and racial difference by considering the yet unacknowledged colonial legacy of the cannibal trope entrenched in the psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity. To approach this question, it is necessary that the scope of the research be restricted to the analysis of four case-studies: Freud, Klein, Róheim, and Fanon. While I do not claim that these cases represent the whole of psychoanalytic tradition, they carry significant trends that deepen the interrogation of psychoanalysis' colonial history, and in this sense, they are exemplary. There are certainly other ways this research question could have been approached, for example, by including more case-studies, or by extending beyond the 1960s to include contemporary perspectives on race in psychoanalysis. However, in choosing neither of the two options, the limits of

⁶² Anderson, Jenson, and Keller, *Unconscious Dominions: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma, and Global Sovereignties*, 17.

this project have turned into something productive. By focusing on Freud and Klein I have shown that the colonial question lies at the heart of two fundamental schools of psychoanalysis. They are both pioneering representatives in separate traditions. Even though Klein differentiated herself from Freud, their theoretical affinity is strong. Additionally, I have chosen not to discuss the independent psychoanalytic tradition as epitomised in the work of Donald Winnicott. While there is significant emphasis on orality, and a stark affirmation of the mother's wish to eat her baby in Winnicott's famous paper 'Hate in the Countertransference',⁶³ I would suggest that these traces rather indicate the strength of the colonial inheritance of psychoanalytic fantasies about the mother-infant relationship and reinforce the argument of examining the early histories of psychoanalysis. Finally, focusing on Freud and Klein has allowed me to identify the role of drive theory and the associations between development and 'savagery' as the primary sites and concepts in psychoanalytic theory that are mostly dependent on colonial dichotomies.

Despite being less well known than Freud and Klein, Géza Róheim played an important role in the history of psychoanalysis, having been the first anthropologically trained psychoanalyst. Róheim's case has helped me examine in depth and in all its complexity the first ever psychoanalytic intervention in a British colony. Nevertheless, while Róheim attempts to adapt psychoanalysis in the colonial situation, it is not until Frantz Fanon's work that a significant decolonial impetus becomes clearly articulated, and attributes to race a prominent place in the formation of subjectivity. Furthermore, in limiting the project to the temporal scope of five decades, my intention is not to imply that the employment of the cannibal trope ceased in the psychoanalytic imaginary after the 1960s.⁶⁴ Rather, this limit emphasises that the scope of this research has been to explore the cannibal trope within the historical and social conditions that produced and fostered it, and not to trace its genealogy and inheritance in either post-Freudian, or post-Kleinian, or post-Fanonian traditions.

⁶³ In the eighteen reasons Winnicott offers for a mother to hate her baby, one reads: 'He excites her but frustrates—she mustn't eat him or trade in sex with him.' D.W. Winnicott, "Hate in the Counter-Transference," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 30 (1949): 69–74.

⁶⁴ In fact, there are instances where it can be encountered long after the collapse of colonial structures, as in Julia Kristeva's work on female melancholia. In this case, it is not the psychoanalyst who conceptualises melancholia as modelled on a symbolic eating but it is the patient who brings this theme through a dream. It is remarkable that the racial dimension remains unaddressed in the text, and the trope is only explored in relation to female aggression and desire towards the mother. Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

What is more, situating my research question in the decades prior to the collapse of the colonial project has allowed me to isolate psychoanalysis, and study it within the scope of its historical focus. My aim has been to put emphasis on the critical intervention of psychoanalysis which, whilst not being able to speak about the colonised, has nonetheless consistently deconstructed the technologies of hegemony of the white coloniser from a psychological point of view. The historical situation aids this research in one more way: it demonstrates that a significant aspect of psychoanalysis' early decades is yet to be explored. The absence of race from the analytic lexicon until Fanon should be treated as symptomatic of colonialism rather than an indication of resistance, or an accidental omission.

Speaking about how race has been featured historically in psychoanalysis, I would like to reflect on my explicit focus on the cannibal trope as opposed to savagery, barbarism and primitivity—which are all overlapping categories used to erect the superiority of white civilisation. First of all, choosing cannibalism has not been an easy decision. This is not merely because of the embarrassment that any interest in unpacking this fantasy creates for any researcher who has a social life. By focusing on cannibalism, I acknowledge that there is a rich and imaginative racist arsenal that supported the formation of European identities against indigenous cultures that are yet to be further explored. The impetus behind the consolidation of this choice has been twofold: firstly, the embarrassment caused by the assertion that the cannibal trope has been deployed, albeit marginally, by psychoanalysis makes imperative the development of a decolonial perspective. Secondly, contrary to other forms of designating a lack of civility (primitivity, savagery, and barbarism), the cannibal trope demonstrates fear, repulsion, and desire. As Maggie Kilgour has shown, in the most extensive and thorough anatomy of the power of this concept,⁶⁵ cannibalism encloses the need for oneness, unity, fusion, and the collapse of boundaries. It is not surprising, therefore, that historically it has proved ripe for psychoanalytic use and analysis.

7.4.2 Clinical Implications

Although this thesis does not claim a place aside literature that engages with psychoanalysis as a therapeutic method, it is neither indifferent nor irrelevant to the implications that it may have in clinical practice. Since the era of the

⁶⁵ Maggie Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990).

first generation of psychoanalysts, significant shifts have taken place in the establishment of the analytic relationship. The counter-transference, as the emotional response invoked in the analyst by the patient is no longer believed to contaminate or hamper the process, just like the psychoanalyst is no longer recognised as an objective observer or the container of the analysand's knowledge of herself but a co-author and a 'socially positioned interlocutor.'⁶⁶ Despite the clinical advancements, a great deal of psychoanalysis' colonialist and racist tentacles, as this project has tried to stress, still remains hidden and unexplored. Missing the historical specificity of psychoanalysis as a science of the human mind threatens to perpetuate colonial forms of violence and inequality, and to haunt the psychoanalytic canon inside as much as outside the clinic in very concrete ways.

As suggested by the discussion of Klein's appropriation of the cannibal trope in Chapter Four, key terms of the psychoanalytic lexicon which still entertain a theoretical and clinical longevity, such as the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive position, have been forged through colonial contexts. As a result, these concepts enclose the affective realm of coloniality, and they invoke imageries that have their historical origins in a racially codified regime. As Ranjana Khanna has argued—following Fanon—this regime is articulated in terms of visibility, or what she calls '*whiting out* [...] and *coloring in*.'⁶⁷ Psychoanalysis, as a theory of subjectivity and a therapeutic practice, relies on terms that bear whiteness as an implicit developmental achievement. A full acknowledgment of how these psychoanalytic ideas are immersed in colonialist imageries would have significant implications on how the psychoanalytic subject is construed and, what the aim of analysis is.

Moreover, once the question of a decolonial perspective on psychoanalytic theory is raised then the politics of psychoanalysis as a clinical practice need to become scrutinised. Following Juliet Mitchell's interrogation of psychoanalysis from a feminist perspective, it follows that feminism is not about the analyst's politics but about how gender, and I would add, race are being experienced as traumatic forms of identification, and what their relevance to the clinical relationship

⁶⁶ Celia Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 201.

⁶⁷ Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 162.

is.⁶⁸ Does 'race' feature in the analytic relationship? Does it affect transference? How and in what ways is whiteness, as a socially privileged form of racial identification in ethnically diverse metropolises pertinent to the psychoanalytic interrogation of individual formation? These are the kinds of questions that this project puts forward in relation to clinical practice. It is only by recognising the possibility that psychoanalysis has disavowed ethnic differences and in doing so it has participated in the globalisation of European hegemony, that its clinical practice can become transformed into a site where these colonial dynamics are withdrawn and allow the space for cosmopolitan psychoanalytic subjectivities to emerge.

7.5 Concluding Note

This thesis contributes to the literature on psychoanalytic thought by offering a unique account of how psychoanalysts have unwittingly partaken of colonial fantasies about 'racial' otherness. By exploring the traces of a racist fantasy as embedded in the psychoanalytic subject, I have exposed how psychoanalysis vacillates between colonial and post-colonial tensions; between radical contributions about subjectivity and oppressive silences and erasures of other forms of subjectivity, between deconstructionist approaches to whiteness and the portrayals of development as a process away from blackness. Race, I have shown, is a socially constructed category that in the colonial milieu was the main lens of demarcating and dehumanising individuals, and therefore ensuring colonial hegemony. I have exposed a fundamental tension that runs through the psychoanalytic texts of Freud and Klein, which becomes transmitted to post-Freudian critics and colonial disputants. This tension is that although psychoanalysis has radically reconsidered what being a (psychoanalysable) subject means—being troubled by inherent contradictions, unreasonable desires, irrational fears, splits, past memories and so on—the language and imageries accompanying the construction of this subject has been strongly dependent on colonial assumptions around whiteness as having the monopoly of humanness. I have demonstrated how the unconscious fantasies that shape psychoanalytic theorisation are drawn from the unacknowledged forms of colonial oppression, and especially from the refusal of psychoanalysis to consider the question of race. This means that psychoanalysis has never been free from or outside of politics, and especially, as I argue in this thesis, from colonialist and racist

⁶⁸ Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

discourses. Rather, as the unusual, uncomfortable and anachronistic angle of the cannibal trope has allowed me to illustrate, psychoanalytic theorising has made a substantial use of a racialised, subhuman figure in the course of the portrayal and analysis of psychoanalytic concepts such as the subject's development, the role of the mother, the aim of drives, the tensions underlying the Oedipus complex, the paternal identification and finally, the colonial unconscious and memory. The colonial psychoanalytic subject either inherits cannibalistic drives that mark the immeasurable incivility of the developmentally 'primitive', or is persecuted sometimes by cannibals who eat their enemies, sometimes by mothers who eat their children. I believe that the narratives of the cannibal trope as historicised and contextualised in this thesis mark a significant development in understanding the history of psychoanalysis as a discipline with an unconscious structure and fantasies that have not been addressed until now.

Furthermore, in exploring the historical, intellectual and disciplinary past of psychoanalysis I have found that psychoanalytic theorising produced from the site of the colony (Australia and Algeria) is plagued by similar racist and sexist fantasies as the kind of theorising produced in European metropolises (Vienna and London). Moving towards the margins, then, does not necessarily entail that race and sexuality become more critically defined.⁶⁹ As Fanon's case illustrates, even though the cannibal trope has been directly addressed and associated with European fantasies, Fanon did not avoid pathologising and problematising racist masculinity by feminising it (namely arguing that the 'Negrophobe' is a closeted homosexual). Similarly, Marcuse's case bolstered the argument that the marginal European discourses (in this case Marxism) are equally permeated by implicit racialised formulations. This marks the need for critical, post-colonial, feminist approaches to psychoanalysis if the colonial inheritance is to be addressed in its entirety.

Overall, this thesis has aimed to make the intellectual histories of psychoanalysis more post-colonial; namely to identify and expose those traces, nodal points and gaps in the psychoanalytic discourse that racialise and sexualise the psychoanalytic subject. The most significant problem is that of the essentialism of the body. I have argued that unless psychoanalysis is made aware of its own enclosed colonial assumptions surrounding the body as naturally, biologically or essentially constructed, it runs the risk of sustaining racism and perpetuating

⁶⁹ I have to thank Dr Magda Schmukalla for pointing this out to me.

discriminations. Finally, this thesis contributes to the literature by offering a new, psychosocial perspective to old ideas—defined by the erasure of race and racial difference. My contribution has been to show that psychoanalysis contains the discursive framework that allows us to challenge, deconstruct and critique racism by offering access to what the discourse of race seeks to conceal.

The tension I have created by bringing the cannibal trope and psychoanalysis together has provided me with the ground for a dynamic discussion between the social and psychological regimes that cannot be studied in isolation. Neither can the clinical, individual realm remain intact from the social surroundings, hegemonic discourses, collective traumas, prejudices and so on. In fact, it is in those instances where psychoanalysis uncritically and unreflectively claims the authority of knowledge over the European subject's impulses, the infant's fantasies and the colonial unconscious that the fundamental openness of psychoanalysis becomes compromised. The designations of unimaginable incivility, as the cannibal trope conveys, exemplify such an instance where the psychoanalytic discourse crosses paths with socio-political certainties. This project, by pointing to racialised margins of psychoanalysis has tried to emphasise the need to maintain a critical, post-colonial, feminist and decolonial perspective towards psychoanalysis. Acknowledging psychoanalysis' colonial past and the ways it has shaped racial and sexual fantasies about otherness, is the only way to put its racist baggage to rest and allow the room for more global, cosmopolitan, democratic psychoanalytic subjects to emerge.

Coda: Is Eating People Wrong?⁷⁰

The impetus for this project came out of a melange of experiences with psychoanalysis: a popular villain psychoanalyst, the unexplored archive of cannibalistic tropes in the psychoanalytic canon and my own anxieties and fears from being a psychoanalytic patient. One of the greatest challenges for me throughout has been how to combine the experience of being in psychoanalysis with the intellectual task of critiquing psychoanalysis. The figure of Hannibal Lecter, which I find both threatening and alluring, exposed a fundamental fear that being in analysis had evoked for me: that of becoming consumed, altered, tainted, divested of the very core of my ‘identity.’ Slavoj Žižek highlights this point in relation to what the figure of Hannibal Lecter discloses about (Lacanian) psychoanalysis, arguing that Lecter condenses the violence of the psychoanalytic demand for the patient: to offer the analyst ‘what we consider most precious in ourselves, denouncing it as a mere semblance.’⁷¹ For Žižek psychoanalysis is established on an exchange, like the ‘quid pro quo’ request Hannibal Lecter makes to Clarise Starling. Confiding her childhood dreams to him is the price he asks for assisting her FBI investigation. Žižek concludes ‘Lecter is not cruel enough to be a Lacanian analyst: in psychoanalysis we must pay the analyst to allow us to offer our *Dasein on a plate*.’⁷² Žižek’s criticism demonstrates on the one hand that psychoanalysis is at its core a financial exchange that aims to shift or resituate the subject in relation to ‘being’ and identity, by ruminating on them and offering them back to the analysand as intangible fantasies, immaterial imaginings about one’s self making the subject ‘*more pliable, more supple, more flexible, more agile, and more delicious*.’⁷³ This is what Žižek, echoing a Lacanian framework, calls ‘mere semblance,’ or what Freud tried to demonstrate through affirming an ‘unconscious’ part of the mind. Apart from inaugurating a debate about the relationship between psychoanalysis, neoliberalism and class that would require a whole new project, Žižek’s cynicism also allows us to witness the modesty of the psychoanalytic task when brought down to its basic elements.

⁷⁰ I have borrowed this title from Malcolm Bradbury’s 1959 novel ‘Eating People is Wrong’ which comically deals with the tensions between social change, liberalism, the post-imperial and post-war frustrations of the 1950s. The didactic claim that ‘eating people is wrong’ seems to mark in the novel, the impossibility of withdrawing from a hostile and antagonistic positionality to one that fosters tolerance and open-mindedness against otherness. Malcolm Bradbury, *Eating People is Wrong*, (London: Picador, 2012[1959]).

⁷¹ Slavoj Žižek, *Interrogating the Real*, ed. Rex Butler and Scott Stephens, 3rd ed. (London: Continuum, 2010), 179.

⁷² Žižek, 179–80. Emphasis in the original

⁷³ Winograd, *Black Psychoanalysts Speak*.

While reflecting on what a feminist approach to psychoanalysis could be, Elizabeth Abel argued that it seems easier to either adopt a polemical stance against psychoanalysis or to become too invested in it, instead of staying with its contradictions, ambiguities, foreclosures, tensions and evasions:

It is too early for feminism to foreclose on psychoanalysis. Vast cultural terrains unfold beyond the boundaries of this essay and beyond those of psychoanalysis as well, undoubtedly. But rather than fixing those boundaries, my goal has been to forestall the sense that we know exactly where they lie and what they necessarily exclude. Psychoanalysis has been resistant to the social, but it need not always, uniformly, be. It is better for feminism to challenge that resistance than to renounce psychoanalysis entirely *or succumb to its seductions*.⁷⁴

Abel exposes an over-investment in the expectations of psychoanalysis, as if, as Jacqueline Rose suggests, there is a demand (and a subsequent disappointment) for a theory that can explain subordination ‘across specific cultures and different historical moments.’⁷⁵ It is easy to idealise psychoanalysis, almost as easy it is to cannibalise it; to devour and destroy it, to dismiss it due to its patriarchal misogyny and homophobia, to sweep away the entirety of its historical and intellectual contributions on the grounds of its racism.

While I am aware that pairing psychoanalysis with the cannibal trope has in no way been a compliment, my project has not been a polemic. My intention has been to demonstrate that psychoanalysis is just one theory about the subject that cannot be studied separately from the social, historical and colonial conditions that made it emerge in the first place. Psychoanalysis tends to become fetishised as a master discourse and a hegemonic form of knowledge about subjectivity; its conceptual and intellectual absurdities become worshipped. Drawing the historical limits of my study in the decolonising moment of the 1960s, I have aimed to illustrate the impact of social imageries in psychoanalytic theorising in their entirety. Moreover, through its invitation to think humbly about theory, the locus of the ‘psychosocial’ has offered me a grounding from where to establish a critical distance from psychoanalysis, whilst remaining a close and sympathetically ally to its project. In a playful analogy, I believe that this is the meaning of the

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Abel, “Race, Class, and Psychoanalysis? Opening Questions,” in *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*, Philosophy, Women’s Studies, Politics (Hove: Psychology Press, 1997), 194. My emphasis.

⁷⁵ Jacqueline Rose, “Femininity and Its Discontents,” *Feminist Review*, Palgrave Macmillan Journals, 80, no. Reflections on 25 Years (2005): 25.

'psychosocial' per se: to make psychoanalysis a 'semblance,' to de-essentialise it, to illustrate its unconscious and to make it like the psychoanalytic subject: '*more pliable, more supple, more flexible, more agile, and more delicious.*'

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