

## ○ VOLUME 12 NUMBER 2, 2013

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Politics of Transgression and Small Gestures**

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*At the start of his life, a man is always congested, drowned in contingency. The misfortune of man is that he was once a child.*

*Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (1952)*

*This issue of borderlands takes its title, 'Politics of Transgression and Small Gestures', from Leela Gandhi's Affective Communities. Although focused on very different geopolitical scenes from those that are of interest to Gandhi, the contributing essays to this issue share her diagnosis of pervasive Manichaeisms that infiltrate and deform relationality in their respective locations, and are similarly invested in exploring what Gandhi calls 'innovative border crossing'. For Gandhi, as for our contributors, such border crossing sheds light on what Jean-Luc Nancy calls the space of 'the between as such'—and it is from this space that the 'crisis of nonrelation' encoded in Manichaean structures is simultaneously disclosed and refused (Gandhi 2006, p. 184). It is in the 'small, defiant flights from the fetters of belonging (Gandhi 2006, p. 7)—flights, in other words, that are part and parcel of the kind of 'politics of transgression and small gestures' that the contributions to this issue of borderlands seek to bring into view for us—that a transformation of the toxic 'quality of unrelatedness' which underpins Manichaean social structures might become possible.*

#### **Curious Conjunctions**

As I sit here gathering my thoughts for this editorial introduction, waiting for inspiration to strike and, in the meantime, gazing idly at the eclectic mix of books that sit on the small 'current projects' shelf on my desk, it occurs to me that neither a coherent project nor even an obvious disciplinary home for such an imaginary project readily jumps out from this strange mix: Frantz Fanon sits next to D. W. Winnicott, who, in turn, sits next to René Descartes and Masud Khan. Leela Gandhi's *Affective Communities* is squeezed between two titles by

Stephen Frosh: the former a trusted old friend, the latter a relatively recent acquaintance. There are books on trauma, on Levinas, and one on narcissism—that one, I now shamefully realise, sitting right next to a recent publication of my own:



What am I to make of this jumble? Part of the answer must surely lie in an acknowledgement that the state of my library is a fairly accurate reflection of the current state of my—disarrayed—mind. But surely there must be more to say than that? Or, to put the question a little more pointedly, what is the story that might want to be told from this curious conjunction of diverse thinkers and bodies of thought? What might Fanon say to Descartes, for example? Or Winnicott to Fanon? Is there any kind of story to be told here?

### **‘The black man is not. No more than the white man’**

Of course there is: there always is a story. As writers, thinkers, intellectuals—in fact, as human beings—we are innately story-telling creatures: we make up stories to help us make sense of the world, or, and perhaps more importantly, to allow us to imagine the world we inhabit in new ways. Stories, especially stories that draw on and conjoin disparate elements, are a way of making the world over, again and again: ‘*Mélange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that’, Salman Rushdie reminds us, ‘is *how newness enters the world*’ (Rushdie 1991, p. 394, emphasis in original). This particular story, the story that emerges from my library and that I want to sketch here,

briefly and broadly, in a bid to frame the contributions to this issue, takes shape around some faint resonances between two thinkers: Fanon and Winnicott. It's a story that begins with a well-known line from Fanon: 'The black man is not. No more than the white man' (Fanon 2008, p. 206). In my many returns to Fanon over the years, I must have read this line, or seen it cited somewhere, a hundred times or more—but it wasn't until my recent immersion in the work of D. W. Winnicott that I suddenly saw something new in it. It is an extraordinary line, of course, even without Winnicott. In one clean sweep, Fanon here repudiates essentialist conceptions of 'the black man' and 'the black problem' (Fanon 2008, p. xiv)—whether they be framed positively, as in Aimé Césaire's championing of Negritude, or negatively, as in Octave Mannoni's attestation of a 'dependency complex' to Africans or, more particularly, to the Malagasy. Decisively dislodging the question of identity from its customary ontological grounding, Fanon relocates it in the relational dynamic operative within the socio-cultural realm instead: 'This essay will attempt to understand the Black-White relationship', he proposes (Fanon 2008, p. xiii, emphasis added).

Not that such a relocation from ontology to relationality is entirely without problems of its own; the extended passage reads:

The black man is not. No more than the white man.

Both have to move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that a genuine communication can be born. Before embarking on a positive voice, freedom needs to make an effort at disalienation. At the start of his life, a man is always congested, drowned in contingency. The misfortune of man is that he was once a child. (Fanon 2008, p. 206)

We must remember here that Fanon was not just a philosopher and political activist; he was also a practicing psychiatrist. So when he reminds us that 'man' is born into, and inherits, certain historical social structures, we need to be aware of the full weightiness that such an inheritance will inevitably hold for him, for nowhere other than in childhood are the seeds for our various psychopathologies planted. In fact, using the same line as above, Fanon suggests, in the opening pages of *Black Skin, White Masks*, that 'we urgently need to rid ourselves of a series of defects inherited from childhood. Man's misfortune, Nietzsche said, was that he was once a child' (Fanon 2008, p. xiv).<sup>i</sup>

What, then, are the particular 'defects' inherited from the colonial childhood Fanon had the 'misfortune' to be born into? And what if we could imagine a different kind of beginning, a different kind of childhood? It is here that British paediatrician and psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott becomes of interest—although I must offer a little proviso before I proceed: I am aware, of course, that in this story I am seeking to spin between these two thinkers much is undoubtedly lost in translation: Fanon, as we know, although arguing 'that only a

psychoanalytic interpretation of the black problem can reveal the affective disorders responsible for [the] network of complexes' encountered in the colonial world (Fanon 2008, p. xiv), was immensely critical of most of his psychoanalytic colleagues in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Thus he insisted, for example, that, while Freud 'demanded that the individual factor be taken into account in psychoanalysis', by contrast, 'the alienation of the black man is not an individual question' (Fanon 2008, p. xv). Hence, even though his analysis in *Black Skin, White Masks* is avowedly 'psychological', he also maintains that 'the true disalienation of the black man implies a brutal awareness of the social and economic realities' (Fanon 2008, p. xiv). It is those realities that most of his colleagues (Freud, Mannoni, Adler et al) sideline in favour of individual factors, making their work of limited use to Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*. And as for Winnicott: although they were contemporaries, it is not clear that Fanon was familiar with his British colleague's work—which may be partly because those particular works of Winnicott's that could have been of interest to Fanon, at the time of writing *Black Skin, White Masks*, did not appear until after its publication in 1952.<sup>ii</sup> Further, Fanon may well have been just as suspicious of Winnicott's analyses as he was of those of his other colleagues, and for similar reasons. That, however, would have been injudicious for, as I will elaborate below, with reference to Winnicott's landmark essay 'Ego Distortion in Terms of True and False Self' (1960), a careful reading of Winnicott certainly allows for links to be made between individual and cultural psychopathology.

### **'There is no such thing as an infant'**

After this little proviso, let me return to my story. For, revisiting Fanon's work after my recent forays into the world and work of D. W. Winnicott, what seemed to appear in this famous line of Fanon's—'The black man is not. No more than the white man'—was the reverberation of an equally famous statement Winnicott remembers having made 'at a Scientific Meeting of the British Psycho-analytical Society, circa 1940': 'I once said, "There is no such thing as an infant"' (Winnicott 1965c, p. 39n1). What does he mean here? And how does this meaning return us to Fanon? Winnicott elaborates: 'whenever one finds an infant one finds maternal care, and without maternal care there would be no infant' (Winnicott 1965c, p. 39n1). On the one hand, he clearly is being quite literal here: an infant would physically die without a caregiver. In other words, *relationality* is necessarily prior to individuality: no individual infant would survive—become an individual—without relationality. Or as Judith Butler puts it: 'When Winnicott describes the ego as a relational process, he is disputing the view that the ego is constituted and there from the outset of life. He is also positing the primacy of relationality to any bounded sense of self' (Butler 2005, p. 58). The 'I', as it emerges in Winnicottian objects relations theory, therefore attests to 'a primary impingement, a primary way in which I am, prior to acquiring an 'I', a being who has been touched, moved, fed, changed, put to sleep' (Butler 2005, p. 69–

70). On the other hand, however, Winnicott has more in mind here than mere physical survival.

What is at stake is the development of a 'True Self'—authentic, agential existence—which Winnicott links to the infant's 'spontaneous gesture' that the good-enough mother meets with affective attunement (Winnicott 1965b, p. 145). If all goes well, what the mother reflects back to the child is its own self, which, as Alice Miller notes, 'is beautifully illustrated in one of Winnicott's images':

[...] the mother gazes at the baby in her arms, and the baby gazes at its mother's face and finds itself therein ... provided that the mother is really looking at the unique, small, helpless being and not projecting her own introjects on to the child. In that case, the child would not find itself in its mother's face but rather the mother's own predicaments. It would remain without a mirror, and for the rest of its life would be seeking this mirror in vain. (Miller 1986, p. 324)

In other words, if all goes well, the mother's face, as a proto-mirror, returns the child's 'spontaneous gesture', thereby assuring it of its own—real, creative and potent—existence. What is significant here is that authentic self-experience emerges not in isolation but through an encounter with another. In fact, in a turn of phrase that is as elegant as it is economical, Winnicott reconfigures Cartesian subjectivity, replacing the Cartesian formula of the self-founding cogito with a relational understanding: 'When I look I am seen, so I exist. I can now afford to look and see' (Winnicott 2005, p. 154). If, conversely, things do not go so well, what emerges is that 'the infant lives, but lives falsely' (Winnicott 1965b, p. 146):

[...] where the mother cannot adapt well enough, the infant gets seduced into a compliance, and a compliant False Self reacts to environmental demands and the infant seems to accept them. Through this False Self the infant builds up a false set of relationships, and by introjections even attains a show of being real, so that the child may grow to be just like mother, nurse, aunt, brother, or whoever at the time dominates the scene. (Winnicott 1965b, p. 146)

What Winnicott points to here, implicitly, is precisely what may have been of interest to Fanon: namely the intergenerational transmission of psychopathology. In other words, and now also drawing in Miller's suggestion above, the False Self emerges for Winnicott if the caregiver cannot adapt well enough to the infant's 'spontaneous gesture' and instead projects her 'own predicaments' onto the child, which the child internalises and (falsely) takes as its own. In a colonial setting, as we saw in Fanon's account of 'the black problem', these predicaments, or 'affective disorders', are not just individual but always also 'social and economic' predicaments, both of which are likely to be projected onto, and internalised by, the child. What this means is that, as a result of these projected and introjected predicaments, a given psychopathology will be passed on to the next generation: as Winnicott says, 'the child may grow to be just like

mother, nurse, aunt, brother, or whoever at the time dominates the scene'. In other words, in introjecting any psychopathologies that may have been part of the caregiver's—individual *and* socio-cultural—predicaments, the child develops a compliant False Self that ensures the intergenerational transmission of psychopathology.

The effects of this dynamic are two-fold: on a socio-cultural level, a certain transhistorical rigidity of psychopathological structures develops; the principal felt effect for the individual, meanwhile, is alienation. Winnicott suggests that, although outwardly compliant, the False Self remains disconnected from, and forever in search of, its own true core—a quest that generally involves coercive efforts to manoeuvre others into that essential mirroring function the caregiver failed to provide. It is a manoeuvre that can, of course, only fail, because the True Self is too buried, too undeveloped, for those others to be able to reflect it back. The end result, in a nutshell, is pathological narcissism: the individual gets stuck between what psychoanalyst Phillip Bromberg, reflecting on his clinical work with narcissistic patients, appositely calls 'the mirror and the mask':

The individual tends not to feel himself at the center of his own life. He is prevented from full investment in living because he is developmentally stuck between 'the mirror and the mask'—a reflected appraisal of himself, or a disguised search for one, through which the self finds or seeks affirmation of its own significance. Living becomes a process of controlling the environment and other people from behind a mask. (Bromberg 1986, p. 439–440)

### **'A quality of unrelatedness'**

Perhaps the resonances with Fanon—resonances that chime in those near-parallel lines, and that circle around questions of relationality and narcissism—are coming more clearly into view now. Certainly, I think, they lend weight to Fanon's suggestion, cited above, that, in a colonial context, both parties 'have to move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that a genuine communication can be born', and that what he calls 'disalienation' (from the 'False Self') stands as the *sine qua non* of moving beyond psychopathology. In fact, I want to push these resonances a little further and suggest that what the juxtaposition of these two famous lines, Fanon's and Winnicott's, perhaps serves to show up, in crystal clarity, is precisely the degree to which relationality—established via the mutuality of gazes in Winnicott—has become perverted in the Black-White relationship, resulting in just those 'affective disorders' Fanon notes in the colonial relational dynamic.

Nowhere is this more painfully expressed than in Fanon's oft-cited traumatic encounter with a white child's fearful gaze: '*Maman*, look, a Negro; I'm scared!' (Fanon 2008, p. 91). Under the impact of the white gaze, Fanon's—the black man's—spontaneous self-experience shatters, leading to alienation: 'I explode. Here are the fragments put

together by another me' (Fanon 2008, p. 89). What Winnicott might describe as the emergence of the 'False Self', Fanon—undoubtedly influenced by Sartre's account of the gaze in *Being and Nothingness* (1943)—identifies, not dissimilarly, as self-objectification: 'I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from my self, and gave myself up as an object' (Fanon 2008, p. 92).<sup>iii</sup> What this means, then, is that, born into the toxic inheritance of a Black-White relationship, a black child is ultimately faced with the *inversion* of Winnicott's anti-Cartesian formula: it is not 'When I look I am seen, so I exist. I can now afford to look and see'—but rather something along the lines of, 'When I look I am seen, so I fragment. I am now an object'. In other words, instead of a Winnicottian inauguration of the True Self through attuned relationality ('There is no such thing as an infant'), on Fanon's account, the cultural relationality that is written into the colonial relationship ('The black man is not. No more than the white man') leads to the exact opposite: splitting, alienation, and the loss of a potent, agential subjectivity.

This perversion of relationality in the colonial relationship is clearly identified in *Black Skin, White Masks*. In an earlier, and sharpened, use of that same famous line of his, Fanon says: 'The white man is locked in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness' (Fanon 2008, p. xiii–xiv)—an interlocking and co-dependent incarceration he astutely diagnoses as 'double narcissism' (Fanon 2008, p. xiv). This 'double narcissism', in turn, finds expression in 'a genuinely Manichaeian notion of the world' (Fanon 2008, p. 27), an observation he carries over into his later, much more overtly militant, text *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), where it reverberates hauntingly, and with an insistence that borders on traumatic repetition compulsion, throughout the first chapter, 'On Violence'. No small wonder, then, that Fanon should come to regard it as a 'misfortune of man' that 'he was once a child', for the world a colonial child is born into is a world where 'genuine communication' (Fanon 2008, p. 206)—or perhaps we could say, on account of Winnicott, genuine relationality—is prevented by the weight of an overbearing pathological inheritance: a 'double narcissism' that finds expression in the Manichaeian enchainment of self to other that gets in the way of genuine relating. In other words—and here's the rub—although Fanon focuses on the Black-White *relationship*, and thereby transports the question of cultural identity from the realm of ontology to the realm of culture, substituting essential being with relational becoming, this relationship is one that is devoid of genuine relationality. Or, to put this differently, the particular form of relationality encountered in the colonial world is, in fact, somewhat perversely marked by what Bromberg calls narcissism's pervasive 'quality of unrelatedness' (Bromberg 1986, p. 439).

For Fanon, it is ultimately his particular inheritance—and the 'defects' it leaves us with—that we, as he says, 'urgently need to rid ourselves of' (Fanon 2008, p. xiv). Which for him means growing up: leaving childhood behind and attaining the freedom from 'contingency' to work towards a world where genuine exchange, a genuine embodied

relationality, becomes possible. Here is how Fanon maps out his programme at the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*:

It is through self-consciousness and renunciation, through a permanent tension of his freedom, that man can create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world.

Superiority? Inferiority?

Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other?

Was my freedom not given to me to build the world of *you*, man?  
(Fanon 2008, p. 206)

In other words, if, 'At the start of his life, a man is always congested, drowned in contingency', then only the overcoming of our infantile beginnings and the 'defects' they leave us with can lead beyond contingency and towards the potency associated with freedom to make the world over: freedom, specifically, to build a form of relationality that transcends the prison cell of 'double narcissism' and reaches the other affectively: 'Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other?'

#### **'A profound affirmation of relationality'**

What might it involve to move beyond our inherited 'defects' and reach such a state of potency and affective capability? In the context of individual psychopathology: usually a whole lot of therapy. However, given that what we are dealing with here 'is not an individual question', but rather a collective, cultural psychopathology, that particular solution hardly presents itself, for we cannot easily put a whole culture on the proverbial couch. This means that other—political—solutions have to be found. Fanon himself, somewhat notoriously, proposes the complete overthrow of the colonial world order in *The Wretched of the Earth*, by violent means if necessary. I do not wish to follow him there. Instead, I would like to draw this loose and somewhat provisional discussion to a close by sewing some small seeds of hope that other ways of transforming the toxic 'quality of unrelatedness' which underpins Manichaeian social structures might be possible—ways that, I suggest, the contributions to this issue of *borderlands* seek to bring into view for us. For, even if we can never quite 'return' to the facilitating environment of Winnicott's nursery and retrieve the attuned primary relationality that, under good-enough circumstances, should have been found there, such relationality may serve as an aspirational ideal that can direct us towards less toxic forms of relating—or it may alert us to scenes where a relationality worthy of the name is already in operation.

Before turning to the articles that make up this issue of *borderlands*, and outlining their respective contributions to the rendering visible of such scenes of relationality, emerging in the midst of toxic



Manichaeisms, I would like to take Leela Gandhi's *Affective Communities* (2006) off my little shelf and impart some of her thoughts, for it is from Gandhi's book that the title for this issue, 'Politics of Transgression and Small Gestures', is taken. Although Gandhi does not engage with Fanon, and neither links what she so evocatively calls 'the monochromatic landscape of imperial division' to narcissism nor draws on Winnicott for an alternative form of genuine relationality (Gandhi 2006, p. 6), her project in *Affective Communities* none-the-less offers some useful pointers for the story I am sketching here. Expressing an overt indebtedness 'to the impulse against imperial binarism [that is] amplified in the postcolonial critiques' (2006, p. 5), Gandhi argues that what some of the utopian socialists she discusses in *Affective Communities* 'aimed to expose' was what she calls the 'antirelational basis of imperialism' (2006, p. 185)—an antirelationality she associates, much as I have here, with an imperial Manichaeism and its insatiable 'craving for the hygiene of oppositionality' (2006, p. 4). Interested in what she variously calls a 'politics of friendship' (2006, p. 9), a 'politics of relationality' (2006, p. 188), an 'immature politics' (2006, p. 177) or—and this is the phrasing that seems to best capture the tenor of the contributions to this issue—a 'politics of transgression and small gestures', Gandhi suggests that a utopian mentality pursues a 'genuine cosmopolitanism' that speaks of 'a profound affirmation of relationality and collectivity' (2006, p. 32).

What interests me in Gandhi's account is precisely her eloquent defence of a politics of relationality: a defence close to my own heart. As part of this defence, she recasts the assumption of colonial relationships as uniformly violent by drawing attention to the numerous 'affective communities' which stood counter to, and troubled, the usual battles lines of Empire. In a noteworthy (if un-noted) inversion of the kind of story Fanon tells us—where, as we saw, 'the misfortune of man is that he was once a child', and where affective capability is gained once the contingencies of childhood, and the 'defects' it leaves us with, are outgrown—Gandhi associates these 'affective communities' with an 'immature politics', which she posits as an alternative to any politics derived from a maturely 'enlightened' Kantian subject. Recasting Kant's definition of Enlightenment as man's emergence from self-imposed immaturity, Gandhi calls this process of maturation 'the exit from immaturity into the asylum of adult rationality' (Gandhi 2006, p. 180). In other words, for her, unlike for Fanon, it is precisely this *exit* from childhood that gets in the way of our affective capabilities; as she argues, 'Kant's influential conception of adulthood [...] is elaborated [...] as a fantasy of autonomous subjectivity: the picture of a unitary and sovereign Self armored affectively against the defenselessness of human existence' (Gandhi 2006, p. 180). 'By contrast', she writes—and here the inversion of Fanon's picture is all but overt—the 'immature' escapee from the prison house of enlightenment rationality remains a creature of contingency, mired, as Martha Nussbaum has written in another context, "in the 'barnacles' and 'seaweed' of passion," ever "messy, needy, uncontrolled, rooted in the dirt and standing helplessly in the

rain” (Gandhi 2006, p. 181). Importantly, this is a good thing, for it is from this space of affective exposure that the possibility for an ‘affective refusal of colonial division’ may emerge (Gandhi 2006, p. 14). In other words: it is precisely the helplessness or vulnerability that is written into such scenes of contingency and exposure that is *also* the condition of possibility for affective connection and transformation. This means that it is not the emergence from, but rather the protection of, the kind of ‘immature’ impressionability Fanon associates with childhood that, for Gandhi, enables the affective politics Fanon desires: the kind of politics that is capable of loosening the ties of the colonial world’s ‘double narcissism’ so that different kinds of ties— affective attachments that criss-cross and destabilise ‘the mutually quarantined categories of colonizer and colonized’—can form (Gandhi 2006, p. 14).

What emerges from Gandhi’s analysis of the scene of colonial psychopathologies is thus not a sense of ‘immature’ political impotence à la Fanon, but, on the contrary, a potent politics of affective vulnerability and exposure: exposure, first and foremost, to the other in an encounter of the kind of ‘unpremeditated relationality’ she associates with Jean-Luc Nancy’s notion of compearance (Gandhi, 2006, p. 184). Nancy writes (and Gandhi cites this passage):

[C]ompearance is of a more originary order than that of the bond. It does not set itself up, it does not establish itself, it does not emerge among already given subjects (objects). It consists in the appearance of the *between* as such: you *and* I (between us)—a formula in which the *and* does not imply juxtaposition, but exposition. (Nancy 1991, p. 29)

It is this from this space of ‘the *between* as such’ that the ‘crisis of nonrelation’ encoded in Manichaeian structures is simultaneously disclosed and refused (2006, p. 184). An affective exposition to the other within the realm of the political, Gandhi concludes, therefore disrupts the functioning of the political and makes the ‘unexpected ‘gesture’ of friendship’ signify as a ‘breach [...] in the fabric of imperial inhospitality’ (2006, p. 189).

### **‘Small, defiant flights from the fetters of belonging’**

Although focused on very different geopolitical scenes from those I have sketched above, the essays gathered in this issue share with Fanon and Gandhi the diagnosis of pervasive Manichaeianisms in their respective locations, and are similarly invested in exploring what Gandhi calls ‘innovative border crossing’. For Gandhi, as for our contributors, such border crossing finds expression in ‘small, defiant flights from the fetters of belonging toward the unknown destinations of radical alterity’ (Gandhi 2006, p. 7)—flights, in other words, that are part and parcel of a ‘politics of transgression and small gestures’.

The first essay, Roy Wagner’s ‘On (not) choosing between mobility and visibility: Crossing sexual and national borders in

Israel/Palestine', takes up the question of 'innovative border crossing' most directly and literally. The essay takes us into the Israel/Palestine fault line and traces the complex, and complexly interrelating, forms of sexual and ethnic identifications that are used to undercut, and subtly defuse, the explosive tension held within this divide. Introducing the term *visibility-mobility regime*, Wagner takes the 2006 LGBT pride events in Jerusalem as a case study to illustrate the 'visibility-mobility tradeoff' demanded by Israel, where 'those recognizable as manifesting pride, seeking LGBT visibility, were denied mobility' and banished to a peripheral stadium event, whereas those seeking the mobility to move through the streets of Jerusalem 'had to make themselves less visibly different'. Presenting his own version of a 'politics of transgression and small gestures', he suggests, however, that 'the visibility-mobility tradeoff, like every binary, has loose fibers, and occasionally allows for techniques that deconstruct visibility/mobility'. In a discussion that carries (implicit) echoes of Fanon's analysis, in 'Algeria Unveiled', of what he calls the 'the historic dynamism of the veil' (Fanon 2008, p. 63), Wagner draws on the notion of passing 'as manipulation of visibility to gain mobility' and focuses on sophisticated forms of passing—always 'individual, contingent, temporary and dangerous'—which function as 'techniques for retaining mobility that do not depend on plain invisibility'. Turning to mathematics for a new notion of 'topology', Wagner sheds light on what is otherwise hidden, or easily obscured: namely those subversive crosscurrents that undercut or allow the manipulation of the binary visibility-mobility tradeoff. What makes these crosscurrents potent, he suggests, is their very opacity: an opacity that 'may motivate people to thoughtfully reconsider the situation in order to make sense of it'.

The second essay, Stephanie Tara Schwartz's 'Toronto, Sarcelles to Sodom: Cinema of the Arab Jewish Diaspora', is similarly invested in revealing some of those 'loose fibers' that unravel, and create different kinds of ties within, every binary. It focuses on two diasporic films by Arab Jewish women, Karin Albou's *La Petite Jérusalem* (France, 2005) and b.h. Yael's *Fresh Blood: A Consideration of Belonging* (Canada 1996), that 'explore and challenge notions of Jewish identity that rely on the binaries of Arab/Jew and Israel/diaspora'. She notes that the term 'Arab Jew' is provocative in that it 'forces us to consider together two categories of identity assumed to be opposites' and suggests that what is at stake is 'the conception of Jews and Arabs as monolithic homogenous entities', a conception which denies 'the overlaps and interconnection of these identities for Jews from Arab countries'. Suggesting that 'it remains incredibly difficult to challenge the irreconcilability of Arabness and Jewishness as essentialized, enemy subjectivities, both on and off the screen', she focuses on scenes in both films where 'Arabness is (re)mapped onto the terrain of Jewish identity' so as to examine 'how these diasporic subjectivities deconstruct homogenous Jewish spaces'. Schwartz utilises Edward Said's notion of 'imaginative geography' to suggest, much like Leela Gandhi might, that although imaginative geography 'has been crucial to the colonial process' in its

mapping of space in binary terms (us and them, inside and outside etc.), the fixity of this mapping is never absolute: 'Concrete security walls can become the tablet upon which the poetry of resistance might be written, a symbol that can help to form new types of belonging in communities drawn according to very different lines'.

While both Wagner's and Schwartz's essays speak to the power of the messy connective tissue always already infiltrating and desterilising even the most stringent 'hygiene of oppositionality', the final essay, Sadhana Bery's 'Imprisoned Imaginaries: Whiteness and Nation of Islam', takes us into terrain where such oppositionality proves difficult to dislodge. Focusing on the 'racialized Manichean categories' created by white supremacist thought, the essay's central concern is to demonstrate 'how white supremacy, through its control of the material, epistemic, and ontological conditions of existence, colonizes the social imaginaries of non-white antiracist movements'. She takes the Black Nationalist, anti-white supremacy organization Nation of Islam as a case study for her discussion because 'its deliberate constructions of racial ideologies in service of its antiracist struggles' illustrates precisely such a colonised social imaginary—which, she suggests, ultimately holds the organisation trapped within 'a doublebind of complicity and resistance'. Given this problematic entrapment within the racialised legacy of white supremacist thought, the key question Bery pursues is whether 'non-racialism [is] a viable political and ontological possibility in a racialized and racist society'. Drawing on Charles W. Mills, she proposes that we 'rethink 'race' as both real and unreal', but that the Nation of Islam fails to undertake this balancing act 'because it remains entrapped within the racial logics of whiteness even in its struggles against white supremacy'. In this case, it appears, visions of a different form of relationality fail to emerge within the stranglehold of overbearing Manichaeisms.

We would like to thank the entire *borderlands* collective, as well as our authors, referees and reviewers, for the time and thought they have invested in this issue. The three essays gathered here may be diverse in subject matter, but what reverberates powerfully through all of them is a deep commitment to the struggle for a form of relationality beyond what appears to be the eternal return of Manichaeism, a struggle that, as Gandhi so aptly reminded us, finds expression in just those 'small, defiant flights from the fetters of belonging' with which our contributors concern themselves in this issue.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> It seems likely that Fanon is misattributing the statement and that what he had in mind was, in fact, Simone de Beauvoir's statement: 'Man's unhappiness, says Descartes, is due to his having first been a child' (de Beauvoir 1948, p. 35). I would like to thank Jo Faulkner for directing me to this reference in de Beauvoir.

<sup>ii</sup> I am thinking here specifically of 'Ego distortion in Terms of True and False Self' (1960) (Winnicott 1965b), but other titles may also have offered material of interest, particularly 'The Capacity to be Alone' (1958) (Winnicott, 1965a), and 'Mirror-Role of Mother and Family in Child Development' (1967), published as a chapter in *Playing and Reality* (1971) (Winnicott, 2005).

<sup>iii</sup> An object, furthermore, whose 'main feature' is compliance, 'with imitation as a speciality' (Winnicott 1965b, p. 147), and that, as we saw earlier, strives to become 'just like [...] whoever dominates the scene at the time'. In Fanon's version, the same dynamic gives rise to assimilationist desires: 'The black man wants to be white. [...] As painful as it is for us to have to say this: there is but one destiny for the black man. And it is white' (Fanon 2008, p. xiii–xiv).

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