



Fanon's Decolonial Transcendence of Psychoanalysis

Nelson Maldonado-Torres Ph.D.^{a,b,c,d}, Mireille Fanon Mendès France M.A.^d, Shahnaz Suffla D. Phil.^{b,e}, Mohamed Seedat D.Phil.^{b,e}, and Kopano Ratele D.Phil.^f

^aRutgers University; ^bUniversity of South Africa; ^cUniversity of KwaZulu Natal; ^dFrantz Fanon Foundation; ^eSouth African Medical Research Council–University of South Africa Masculinity and Health Research Unit; ^fStellenbosch University

ABSTRACT

Coloniality continues to invade the psychomaterial lives of the condemned. Invoking psychoanalysis and phenomenology to engage with modern psychopathologies and race, gender, and sexuality, Fanon developed seminal ideas on social suffering in the context of colonial violence on psychic life. In reading Fanon, we discern two challenges: the decolonial transcendence of psychoanalysis as a theoretical framework, and the decolonial transcendence of psychoanalysis as a practice. These challenges are integral to the transcendence of disciplines and healing practices, and the requirement to develop a “multidimensional investigation” of human beings in the face of alterity and sociality in human reality. Fanon’s decolonial turn in psychoanalysis offers the makings of a decolonial and Fanonian oath for healing, of which decolonial love is a central principle. Our instantiation of transcendence of practice orients toward the provisions for a decolonial and Fanonian oath for healing, animated through epistemic agency, politico-affectivity, actional consciousness, and radical relationality.

While Frantz Fanon studied psychiatry in a department that was focused on neurology and that emphasized the biological roots of certain psychological conditions (Cherki, 2006; Fanon, 2018), he was an avid reader and student of phenomenology and psychoanalysis, two approaches that opposed the biological reductionism found in perhaps the most dominant approaches to the science of the mind at the time. Already in his doctoral dissertation of 1951, which focused on the study of a neurological illness, Fanon drew from phenomenology when he asserted that, different from a tree, for instance, “A human being always exists in the process of . . .” (Fanon, 2018, p. 218). He also celebrated psychoanalysis’s attention to alterity, interrelationality, sociality, and, in relation to Jacques Lacan’s work (see Fanon, 2018), language, dimensions that require approaches and forms of study that are different from the natural sciences.

Psychoanalysis and phenomenology offered Fanon a terminology and theoretical framework that he engaged, critically and creatively, in his reflections on modern psychopathologies, as well as in his analysis of race, gender, and sexuality. They were surely not the only discourses that instilled in Fanon a sense of the complex, rich, and irreducible dimensions of human reality. He clearly learned as much or more from the work of Negritude poets and intellectuals, particularly his fellow Martinican Aimé Césaire, whom he credits for contributing to cause the first “metaphysical experience” of West Indians in his own native island of Martinique (Fanon, 1988, pp. 21–23). Negritude and, more generally even, discourses that approached colonization, antiblack racism, and racism as fundamental problems in the formation and ongoing problematics of globalized Western modernity greatly informed Fanon’s approaches to the human sciences from early on.

In his initial work, Fanon (2008) would start developing his own theoretical framework by not only putting these and various other discourses and approaches—for example, Marxism—in critical and creative dialogues with each other, but also by testing their presumed universality in relation to the lived experience of blackness and coloniality. Combined with observations and analyses derived from his own experience as a francophone Black subject from the Caribbean, as a psychiatric doctor, and as a militant in the Algerian Liberation Front, these reflections led him to pursue major innovations in psychology and philosophy. 45

One cannot possibly ignore that Fanon lived in a crucial time, through and shortly after the Second World War, when skepticism about the promises of European “civilization” had generalized more than at any time before, a time that coincided—although it was not coincidence—with a second massive wave of struggles for independence and anticolonial and anti-neocolonial struggles in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the Americas. This period has been characterized as a second major moment of the decolonial turn (see Maldonado-Torres, 2018), and it played a significant role in the formation of what we refer to here as southern theory, by which we mean the combination of questions and concepts to address those questions that are grounded on practices of liberation and decolonization. We are still in the process of fleshing out the insights and contributions of Fanon and other anti- and decolonial intellectuals from that era. In some respects, while parts of their insights reflect specificities of their time, in other respects they transcend their time and seem to be talking to us about the present and future. 50 55

When examining Fanon’s work, there are at least two very broad challenges that Fanon raises for any student of psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and/or the human sciences today. These are also contributions and challenges to any form of southern theory. We focus on two challenges: the decolonial transcendence of psychoanalysis as a theoretical framework, and the decolonial transcendence of psychoanalysis as a practice. These challenges are part of more general decolonial transcendence of disciplines and healing practices that one encounters in Fanon’s work. 60 65

Decolonial transcendence of psychoanalysis as a theoretical framework

Fanon (2018) was convinced from early on that the study of human beings demands a “multidimensional investigation” (p. 218). Fanon was arguably ahead of his time when making this claim, which does not mean that he was the first or the only one in making it, and he would come to develop an original development of this insight. A “multidimensional investigation” is arguably different from as well as more challenging and richer than what is often called “interdisciplinary study.” Interdisciplinarity keeps the focus on the disciplines, and by doing this it cannot avoid reifying the disciplines even as it seeks to combine them. A “multidimensional investigation” makes reference to a reality that defies disciplinary decoding—a reality that is always a moving target and is thus unstable—as well as to a thinking activity that requires constant creativity and critical insight. 70 75

Fanon (2018) believed that what make the study of human beings so challenging, and what also seems to be at the heart of the instability of human reality and the intentionality of human consciousness [that “a human being always exists in the process of . . . ” (p. 218)], are alterity and sociality. Alterity and sociality create an open-ended set of actual and potential relations, a sort of open web or field of interrelationalities. This view informed Fanon’s appreciation of psychoanalysis. As Fanon put it in his doctoral dissertation, prior to the publication of *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008): 80

The human being ceases to be a phenomenon from the moment that he or she encounters the other’s face. For the other reveals me to myself. And psychoanalysis, by proposing to reintegrate the mad individual within the group establishes itself as the science of the collective par excellence. (Fanon, 2018, p. 219)

Psychoanalysis’s recognition of the instability and sociality of human reality made it an important reference in the effort to develop a “multidimensional investigation” of human beings, provided that it avoided the reification of its methods and a fixation with its status as a science. Fanon (2008) pointed to as much when he asserted in *Black Skin, White Masks* that he left “methods to the botanists and mathematicians. There is a point at which methods devour themselves” (p. xvi). 85

Fanon (2008) presses further on the importance of alterity and sociality through his writings, including *Black Skin, White Masks*, where he argued that while Freud “demanded that the individual factor be taken into account in psychoanalysis . . . the alienation of the black man is not an individual question” (p. xv). This is what led Fanon to assert that “alongside phylogeny and ontogeny, there is also sociogeny” (p. xv), by which he was pointing both to the role of alterity and sociality in human reality, and to the need to address questions of madness and healing through a sociodiagnostic. While the call for a sociodiagnostic points to potential contributions by sociology, economy, historical materialism, and other forms of social study, Fanon avoids the reification of any such disciplines. Sociogeny is not sociology. For Fanon (2008), sociogeny entails both the important role of social formations and structures in the generation of alienation, and the very unstable character of those social formations, which cannot “escape human influence” (p. xv). That is, social structures are as unstable as individuals: Both are constituted and haunted by alterity and they are part of the open-ended web of interrelationalities.

It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of the role of alterity and sociality in Fanon’s philosophical, psychological, and political engagement. This helps to explain why *Black Skin, White Masks* starts with chapters that focus on intersubjective human relations: language (chapter 1) and love (chapters 2 and 3). In doing this, Fanon seeks to approach his subject matter by going to the very roots of human reality and its instability: to the generation of attitudes toward the self and others within an open-ended web of interrelationalities. This shift can be seen as part of a larger critique of Cartesianism and positivism in some areas of the (largely European) human sciences, yet much more is taking place in the text.

Black Skin, White Masks does not focus on language and love as abstract universals, but as they are experienced in the lives of Black subjects in a fundamentally colonial and antiblack world. By doing this, the text introduces a decolonial turn in psychology, philosophy, and the human sciences, which includes an expansion of the meaning and significance of racism, antiblackness, coloniality, racial disalienation, and decolonization. *Black Skin, White Masks* demonstrates that racialization and coloniality are not only sociopolitical issues, but also metaphysical ones, in the sense that they take place at the level of the very generation of human reality. Put differently, Fanon demonstrates that coloniality and racism radically transform the open-ended web of interrelationality that is at the core of the instability of the human, turning it into a place of racially based annihilation, self-denial, and sexual violence. This could be referred to as a form of metaphysical catastrophe (Maldonado-Torres, 2016a, 2017a, 2019, 2021), one that, through the force of the gun, the knife, conquests, invasions, systematic murder and rape, hegemonic cultural production, skewed conceptions of the medical profession, and the lethal benevolence and sometimes rampant racism of the “liberal arts and sciences,” among vast other means, radically disrupts the basic coordinates of human reality and imposes itself as the new norm.

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Fanon’s (2008) multidimensional analysis in *Black Skin, White Masks* seeks to diagnose the catastrophe at the heart of modern/colonial dominant subjective, cultural, and social transformation of the open-ended web of interrelationality. Fanon focuses on the phenomenon of Black people who engage in multiple strategies to distance themselves from blackness because it demonstrates the damaging effects of catastrophe and provides an entry into its critical analysis. The production of a Black antiblack person shows the extent to which even the most basic forms of interrelationality, that is, language and love, are distorted to the point of becoming tools in the construction of a world that reproduces the foundational logic that sustained modern colonialism and racial slavery. Blackness is, thus, a site of “multidimensional investigation” that exposes the bad faith (Gordon, 1995) and contradictions at the heart of the catastrophic modern/colonial world, and that reveals the depth and utterly sinister, as well as destructive, dimensions of modern/colonial catastrophe (Maldonado-Torres, 2016a, 2017a, 2019).

Under antiblack modern/colonial catastrophe, language and love are meant to be used as means to create and recreate a world that keeps everything Black at the polar end of what it is to be human. This catastrophe erodes and transforms the open web of interrelationality to the point where everything obtains new and sometimes strange and macabre meanings.

Gender is a particularly central term and area that acquires peculiar forms under catastrophe. Fanon (2008) pays attention to gender in relation to the search for heterosexual love and in interracial relationships in the second and third chapters of *Black Skin, White Masks*. There is an ample amount of literature that addresses Fanon's analyses in these chapters. T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting provided a broad summary and critical engagement of typical approaches in her monograph on Fanon and feminism (see Sharpley-Whiting, 1997). Here we wish to highlight two points. The first point is that Fanon anticipated contemporary discussions about the coloniality of gender, by which we mean, following the work of María Lugones and other decolonial feminists (e.g., Espinosa-Miñoso et al., in press; Lugones, 2008, 2010), the way in which Black and racialized colonized subjects are placed outside hegemonic conceptions of the human and, thus, are often considered more like animals than gendered human beings. Black feminist theorists such as Angela Davis (1983) and Hortense Spillers (1987) have called attention to similar phenomena for a long time. Lewis Gordon (2015) has also addressed similar issues about the effects of the collapse of gender difference as they appear in the second and third chapters of *Black Skin, White Masks*. Gordon (2015) notes that in an antiblack world, Black men's and Black women's desires are rerouted in such a way that they join "in search of words of whiteness from the same source—the white man" (p. 44). This means that what an antiblack Black man wants and what an antiblack Black woman want "collapse into the same," to use Gordon's terminology. Gordon (2015) points out that this situation represents a difference with "classical and Lacanian psychoanalyses," which presuppose "a distinction between what a woman wants and what a man wants" (p. 44). Gordon (1997) argues elsewhere that race causes gender differentiation to collapse at a certain level among Whites too, since in an antiblack world whiteness and masculinity are often coextensive. This means, for instance, that in many situations White women function as White men, particularly in the face of Black people, as well as people who are other-than-White.

The second point that we wish to highlight follows from the previous one: that Fanon's "multi-dimensional investigations" require a study of the multiple and varied ways in which gendering and ungendering take place within the matrix of modernity/coloniality. As Fanon (2018) put it, when it comes to human beings, "At issue is no longer one fact but a mosaic of facts" (p. 218). *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon, 2008) demonstrates that this mosaic of facts shifts and changes, reflecting the catastrophic reordering of things in modernity/coloniality.

Gordon (1997) builds on this approach in his analysis of "sex, race, and the matrixes of desire in an antiblack world," which is also the title of an important, but not yet fully considered, chapter in his *Her Majesty's Other Children: Sketches of Racism from a Neocolonial Age*. As Gordon (1997) points out, "Identities can be structured by multiple matrices of value. These matrices take multivalent forms of sexual, political, and theological economies of expression premised on centers of power" (p. 85). This means that in the matrices of value and desire one finds "identities that transform themselves along grids of institutional power" (p. 85). In the modern era, these "grids of institutional power" are arguably part and parcel of what Aníbal Quijano referred to as "the racist model of universal social classification of the world population" (2000a, p. 540) or the "patron mundial de poder capitalista eurocentrado y colonial/modern" [global model of capitalist eurocentered and colonial/modern power] (2000b, p. 373). Mignolo (2009) has referred to this as the colonial matrix of power, and Lugones (2007) has used this framework as a reference in her elaboration of the colonial/modern gender system. In light of these and other similar analyses and insights—including Wynter (1995, 2003)—modernity/coloniality appears as an overarching matrix within which power and desire reproduce themselves in constant reiterations of antiblackness, anti-indigeneity, and practices of colonization and racial slavery. In short, the modern and contemporary transformations of identities that Fanon and Gordon explore take place within and respond to the catastrophic disordering and reordering of alterity in the antiblack modern/colonial world.

Consider that if human reality is fundamentally unstable and shifting due to the movements, orientations, and reorientations of subjectivity in relation to alterity, then the entire matrix of meanings and significations in the known world is bound to dramatically change when the meaning of alterity mutates. Desire, along with the basic means of relating to others, such as language and love,

also mutates. As Sylvia Wynter (1995) and decolonial feminists such as Lugones (2007) have made clear, the invention of blackness and indigeneity in the context of the expanding “New World” played a major role in these transformations. The ensuing changes in intersubjective relations, the world economy, knowledge, culture, and the forms of authority—what Quijano (2007) referred to as the coloniality of power, and others have thematized as the coloniality of knowledge and being (Mignolo & Escobar, 2010)—dramatically changed the horizon of possibilities and the very line between what is considered possible and impossible. 195

In short, a lesson from much work by Black and decolonial feminists such as Davis, Lugones, and Spillers, as well as from Fanon’s and Gordon’s work, is that one cannot resort to mechanic or predefined interpretations of gender roles or of sexual dynamics. When it comes to Black and groups that in the United States are referred to as people of color (non-Whites in other contexts, but there is no universal designation), one needs to consider not only the various ways in which gender terminology is imposed on subjects and communities, but also the way in which racialized subjects ultimately remain below the zone where gender is meant to work as a differentiation between men and women—this is arguably not so much a zone of nonbeing as a zone below the zones of being and nonbeing (Maldonado-Torres, 2016a). This does not mean that there are no differences in how Black and racialized “women” and “men” experience racism, but (a) that such differences may not be best understood through the category of gender, and (b) that the differences sometimes reveal underlying commonalities and a similar destiny—for example, to desire whiteness and to be kept afar from or help counter the presence of blackness. 200 205 210

Decolonial transcendence of psychoanalysis as a practice

Fanon’s decolonial turn in psychoanalysis is not only theoretical but also practical. His path from psychiatric doctor and director of a psychiatric hospital to a militant in the Algerian Liberation Front remains one of the clearest examples of the imperatives at the core of the decolonial attitude, which is both theoretical and practical simultaneously (see Maldonado-Torres, 2016a, 2017b). The decolonial attitude involves not only the transcendence of disciplinary frameworks, but also resignation from dominant systems of recognition and established criteria of merit, as well as the effort to build relations with others with the goal to counter modern/colonial catastrophe and to create what Fanon (2008) called “the world of *you*” (p. 206). 215 220

Building the world of you is the quintessential counter-catastrophic aspiration par excellence, as it entails the reconstitution of the meaning and function of alterity and, with it, the restoration of the human—for a discussion of decolonization as counter-catastrophic activity see Maldonado-Torres (2016a). Understood in this way, the decolonial attitude seeks not only to understand the world, but to heal it. Different from dominant approaches to healing, which are focused on the individual, decolonial healing addresses the entire field of interrelationalities and everything that shapes them, including culture, institutions, and structures. Healing from coloniality and building the world of you require, then, social and political activity. 225

When Fanon resigned from his position of Director at the Psychiatric Hospital in Blida-Joinville to join the Algerian Liberation Front, many other civil servants, foreigners, and French citizens chose to go back to France and escape the turmoil in Algeria. Fanon could have done the same and continued his professional practice and research in France or any of its other colonies. Fanon was far from his native island of Martinique in the Caribbean, and he was not part of the ethnoracial majority groups in Algeria. His decision to stay in Algeria reflects a rejection of the appeals of middle-class status, which he could have claimed as a professional, and a repudiation of the seductions of essentialisms of origin of birth, place, and race in defining decolonial struggle. 230 235

Fanon (1988) makes clear that what drives him to resign from his position and to stay in Algeria is his commitment “to attenuate the viciousness of a system of which the doctrinal foundations are a daily defiance of an authentically human outlook” (p. 52). He found that colonial Algeria was a context of “systematized dehumanization” and he joined others in the efforts to end colonialism and 240

establish the basis of a different social and human reality. In this Fanon makes clear that in modern/colonial settings such as Algeria, sociogeny and its sociodiagnostics remain incomplete without social struggle. Thus, the analyst must by necessity become part of a social movement.

To be sure, social movements, even decolonial ones, are never a panacea of perfection. Fanon realized the many pitfalls and internal contradictions that made social transformation difficult. He died shortly after raising a number of important warnings in the effort to avoid a repetition of colonial structures and colonial mentalities in Algeria (see Fanon, 2007). In spite of the vicissitudes of the Algerian revolution and other revolutions for independence in the 20th century, though, Fanon left us with a set of ideas, ideals, and principles that remain important for any pursuit of decolonization. These ideas, ideals, and principles offer the makings of a renewed oath, no longer solely a Hippocratic oath, but a decolonial and, indeed, Fanonian oath, for healing. 245 250

A decolonial and Fanonian oath for healing would be one that calls attention to the role of alterity and sociality in the making of human reality and that seeks to restore the basic coordinates that make up a human world—to restore the fundamental unstability of the human and the open forms of interrelations and interconnections among humans that make this possible. This oath would also be a call for self-transformation, for the creation of community, for collective action, and for political reparations. The Fanonian and decolonial healer's oath would formulate as a matter of principle the basic terms of what the Chicana feminist theorist Chela Sandoval has called decolonial love (Sandoval, 2000; see also Figueroa, 2015; Gräbner, 2014; Maldonado-Torres, 2008, 2016a, 2021; Ureña 2017, 2019a), arguably expressed in succinct form in one of the few epigraphs—two of which are from works by Aimé Césaire, including this one—that Fanon (2008) includes in *Black Skin, White Masks*: “There is not in the world one single poor lynched bastard, one poor tortured man, in whom I am not also murdered and humiliated” (p. 64). This sentence also expresses the ethicopolitical imperative at the heart of the decolonial attitude, and redefines the task of the healer in the modern/colonial world (Maldonado-Torres, 2017b, 2021). 255 260 265

Healing in an antiblack modern/colonial world

In the current moment of the decolonial turn (see Maldonado-Torres, 2017b), it is apparent that the call for an insurgent (re)reading and practice of psychoanalysis is one that requires no less than a multidimensional and multiperspectival analytic that is at once historical and of inventive. The requisite to comprehend the human psyche in relation to its sociohistorical coordinates (Bulhan, 1985), to be attentive to the manifold wounds of the modern/colonial world and the psycho-affectivity of the oppressed, necessarily requires a focus on psychopolitics and ethicopolitics. The politicization of the psychical and of ethics is to offer decolonial purchase to the enunciative and actional exigencies of psy-work—within and without psychoanalysis—as a potential site of healing, which we understand here to be necessarily connected to revolutionary impulses in consciousness, meaning-making, affectivity, resistance, activism, and relationality. Interpreted through a liberatory frame, such an imperative translates concomitantly into radically interpolated practices that transcend the clinic of psychoanalytic universalism (universalization of subjecthood; individualization and interiorization of all psychic disruption; myth of psychic integration; production of racialized subjects) toward praxes that not only politicize social suffering and healing, but also seek to surpass the kinds of taut applied, disciplinary, and institutional frames that ultimately resist the project of sociogeny. Viewed from this standpoint, the implied undertaking is not simply a matter of repurposing; here, it is to trouble with the decolonial attitude psychoanalysis's very fidelity to its constitution, clinic, and commitment. Certainly, as is evident in the preceding reading, Fanon (2008) envisioned and pursued ruptural and interstitial praxis toward alternative psychologies and socialities. 270 275 280 285

Inspired thus, we turn to an Azanian¹ instantiation of liberatory praxis as a way of engaging situated enactments and possibilities toward the decolonial and Fanonian oath. We offer an articulation that derives from the nexi of the psychological, political, and ethical, and forms of creative undisciplining (Maldonado-Torres, 2016b) to consider the work of healing in the context of the systemic wounding of

Black life and attendant traumatic materialities, which remain immanently placed in the lived experience of being Black in an antiblack world (see Biko, 2004; Manganyi, 1973). Our offering is informed by the transcendence of psychoanalysis as theory and practice, with origins in decolonial-inflected community, liberatory and African psychologies, though by design it exceeds these disciplinary parameters too. Our exemplar motions toward critical apertures for “recognizing the colonial wounds that are historically true and still open in the everyday experience of most people” (Mignolo & Vazquez, 2013, p. 17), as well as the pluralization of healing epistemologies and practices, both of which are directly pertinent to the liberatory aspirations of psychoanalysis. In turn, this invites a theorizing that privileges local communities of healing practice and counternormativities, where the imperative is to situate within the racialized, gendered, and colonial contexts “where theory is an act of survival” (Hallsby, 2021, p. 60). In this respect, we find impetus in the tenets of Black Consciousness philosophy—as articulated by Stephen (Steve) Bantu Biko (see Biko, 2004)—that locates subjectivities and modes of being, and therefore the contingencies for radical forms of healing, in the context of colonial violence on psychic life (Suffla & Seedat, 2021). Centrally, we submit that our illustration orients toward and animates the provisions for a Fanonian and decolonial oath for healing, of which decolonial love is a key premise.

Specifically, we focus here on Mohamed Seedat’s and Shahnaaz Suffla’s work at various sites in Azania. Located in the Institute for Social and Health Sciences at the University of South Africa, this work is a transdisciplinary and community-engaged effort that locates healing within the triple pursuit of psychosocial, material, and epistemic justice. At this particular juncture, our work is further placed within today’s colliding pandemics of injustice and viral outbreak. Our program is facilitated by participatory methodologies, psycho- and technosocial platforms, gender-focused applications, community organizing strategies, community training, and local networks of community support. Our interventions obtain from participatory action research undertaken in collaboration with Black communities forced to live on the social margins (see Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). Our collaboration, albeit dynamic, spans three decades of co-construction and co-action around a suite of practices focused on, among others, violence and its prevention. We remain mindful that research continues to be yoked to the “psychology and politics of imperialism and colonialism” (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012, p. 20) and as much in the micropolitics of power and authority, and that the dialectic of openings and closures in interrelationalities remains ever present in our collective engagement. Yet we have attempted to (re)imagine the liberatory capacities of psy theory, research, and practices, and remain alert to the decolonial options that make for healing praxes in the context of the historicity, lived realities under race, gender, and class oppression, everyday lives, and everyday sites of struggle and hope intrinsic to Black suffering and alienation. Contextually taken, this work is concerned with how the unreckoned past of Azania continues to structure the present in psychical, material, and epistemic ways. The evolving constituents of our African-situated strivings to vitalize the Fanonian and decolonial healer’s oath—co-assembled with our community partners—are shaped along the contours of epistemic agency, politico-affectivity, actional consciousness, and radical relationality.

The epistemological wound of coloniality is written into and simultaneously bred by mainstream theories and practices of healing—and their fixity—within the psy-disciplines (e.g., Seedat & Suffla, 2017; see also Ureña, 2019b). In the context of alterity, it can be seen how this ultimately reproduces forms of onto-epistemic injury that produced Black subjects as the other of human in the first place. The idea that “knowledge exists only as an ecology of knowledges” (see Santos, 2016, p. 111), and therefore within an ecology of subjectivities, is assailed by what Gordon (2021) refers to as “organized, reality-ignoring epistemic practices . . . when a discipline gives up its reach for or at least movement toward reality and turns inward to make itself into reality” (p. 39). Gordon (2021) warns against the fetishizing of method and calls in turn for a “teleological suspension of disciplinarity” (p. 42), which is to be responsive to the demonstrable facets of reality and the ways in which meaning is made in the social world. Here, the practitioner acknowledges methodological incompleteness alongside creatively

¹The Indigenous name applied to South Africa by Black liberationists.

(co-)constructing beyond meanings and traditions located solely within prior knowledges. This transcendence of the normative is to counter the kinds of disciplinary schema that install the condemned as unknowing subjects in healing praxes (see also Turner & Neville, 2020). 340

To illustrate, we turn to select enunciations from a collaborative intervention that draws on diverse narrational and activism modalities (story circles, digital stories, participatory documentary, theatre, Photovoice) to center community ways of knowing. The intervention is anchored in the precepts of epistemic plurality, relationality, and social change (Lau & Seedat, 2017), and an African locus of enunciation—from whence to think, interpret, theorize, represent, and inscribe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Ngūgi wa Thiong’o, 1986; Ratele, 2019). In a story shared and digitally produced by a group of community leaders, the storytellers recount their everyday injuries (“struggles, hardships and suffering”) and desires (“we want to be heard”) in the “aftermath” of apartheid. They enunciate the psychical wounding of their oppression, “the sorrow of the community,” as “Lost hopes. Our voices go unheard. No water. No electricity. Inadequate access to education. Crime, violence and poverty. Being Black and poor still stand in the way of our liberation.” Similarly, another narrator references suffering against “conditions of unemployment, condition of poverty, condition of mental slavery.” This reality-marking expression of the psychomateriality of their lived realities functions first as “knowledge-as-intervention-in-reality,” as opposed to a mere “representation of reality” (Santos, 2016, p. 201). Second, the epistemic agency of the knowers, the storytellers in this case, searches our own epistemic agency and epistemic transgression to privilege a shared set of psychopolitical and ethicopolitical desires, born of struggle, that transcend the codes of “truth” etched into the psy-knowledge archive (see Suffla & Seedat, 2021) to respond to the wounding wrought by coloniality. In his reading of the kinds of disalienation thus implied, Malherbe (2021) argues here for a historically sensitive epistemic consciousness that is at once psychological and political. 350 355 360

As a constituent of the psychopolitical and ethicopolitical imperatives already noted, the contour of politico-affectivity refers to the realms and processes in which affects circulate and interchange between individuals and collectives, connecting them in a politicized multitude (Suffla et al., 2020). To politicize affect is therefore to connect affect to the political and ethical features of lived realities—to perceive affect in relation to oppression, knowing, materiality, action, and solidarity, as it moves through subjectivities, spaces, histories, epistemologies, and ontologies (see Ahmed, 2014; Seedat, 2017; Seedat & Suffla, 2017). From this perspective, politico-affectivity can act to both catalyze and support healing, as well as constrict and retrogress it. From a decolonial vantage specifically, politico-affectivity exposes the underside of the modern/colonial wound (see Maldonado-Torres, 2008) and offers alternative openings for healing. 365 370

Returning to the story of the community leaders—in expressing their pain and rage at “lost hopes, broken promises,” of being “totally ignored,” where “our voices go unheard,” they simultaneously evoke politico-affectivity to assert agentic resistance:

Not even apartheid could break our spirit and our determination to exist . . . driven by the injustices, strengthened by our will to survive, ignited by the desire to re-create hope, striving towards transformation, united in our commitment and responsibilities, we fight on for a better life. 375

In pronouncing on the denigration of blackness and the abjection of Black life, the storytellers mobilize politico-affective resources that incline toward several signifiers of knowing, relating, and feeling. We focus specifically on radical hope, here denoted by insurgent forms of interiority and beingness, where struggles and desires are located within the existing realities of systemic oppression, and in solidarity and action too (Suffla et al., 2020). To be sure, radical hope does not alter the “degrees of being human” (i.e., metaphysical catastrophe) (Maldonado-Torres, 2016a, p. 11). Yet as a healing device, radical hope—as one feature of politico-affectivity—conveys the will and movement toward alternatives possibilities wherein the charge is to “resist” and “protest,” “not to be dehumanized, not to be treated as a second-class citizen, not being marginalised,” and to secure “a legacy and place for our future generation.” Notwithstanding the bounds of radical hope, the reach here is for rehumanizing and also humaning—toward a new humanism (Biko, 2004; Fanon, 2008). The latter, according to 380 385

Erasmus (2017), is a “process of life-in-the-making with others” (p. xxii) and a historically and contextually located praxis. Thus, alongside and in interchange with our community partners, we read ourselves as politically engaged feeling social actors. 390

Actional consciousness encompasses a set of conditions that makes it possible for oppressed subjects to situate within historical processes in order to act on the realities of the present. It is contingent on the awakening of forms of critical consciousness that give way to the articulation of social pathology in the first place, and is propelled by activist struggle against ideological and material oppressions in the second (Freire, 2005). Maldonado-Torres (2017b) sites action in this sense within the decolonial attitude as it relates to the “very production of being” (p. 434), referencing actional impetus to Fanonian thought about the processes through which subjects can become healthy and become social agents in rehumanization practices. Within our own engagement setting, the knowing-acting-being to which actional consciousness subscribes also recognizes the circuitous course between academic and activist theorizing and practices, as well as the various actional subjectivities that come to shape healing praxis. The collective act of imagining, inventing, and acting that is intrinsic to actional consciousness thus performs as a form of differential consciousness (Sandoval, 2000), which makes not only for breaking from dominant ways of thinking about and practicing healing, but also for marshalling racialized, gendered, and classed alienations as a field for retrieval, relationality, and resistance, and as healing in and through this very process. 400 405

To illustrate the kind of actional consciousness that we describe here, a community activist who features in a co-produced documentary on everyday struggles and triumphs shares (emphases added):

The ANC [African National Congress]² government of the day, they were evicting us from shack to shack . . . we were determined to say that we will live in Thembelihle, *whether they would like it or not*, people will reside in Thembelihle, irrespective of them having, you know, these forced removals, forced evictions. We were *united in one common goal of saying we want our place*, where we call it our home. That’s *where the real fighting started*. 410

In another pronouncement that depicts the lived realities of being structurally positioned in damnation and in the knowing of this, an audience member at a public screening of this same documentary summons: “Don’t say ‘no’ I’m fine. I’m not poor. I’m not sick. I’m not hungry. You must be conscious!” To be conscious in the way inferred here and to heed the call to actional consciousness, is for us to engage as activists ourselves, and not merely as witnessing helpers to social suffering. As Fanon (2008) iterated, the work of an analyst is to facilitate processes of conscientization so that Black subjects may move toward disalienated resistance [“abandon his attempts at a hallucinatory whitening” (p. 74) and “act in the direction of a change in the social structure” (p. 74)]. This cannot be done from outside of struggles for liberation, since the analysts themselves have to go through processes of disalienation and decolonization that do not fully take place within the formal spaces of their schooling, training, or professional practice. Analysts whose practice is directed by what we are referring to here as the Fanonian oath cannot remain in their privileged position of analysts; they have to be at the service of communities in movement, refine their views, learn new tasks, and in the process shed “all that calculating, all those strange silences, those ulterior motives, that devious thinking and secrecy as [they] gradually [plunge] deeper among the people” (Fanon, 2007, p. 12). 415 420 425

Radical relationality is axial to our conceptualizations of epistemic agency, politico-affectivity, and actional consciousness. It refers to decolonial enactments of “being with” to foster interrelationalities and solidarities in the face of alterity and difference. In this way of being-with, we act as both window and mirror to one another in consciousness and action. From a Black Consciousness standpoint, the idea of consciousness and action as relational in form is to “restore to the Black man the great importance we used to give to human relations” (Biko, 2004, p. 106). In this sense, radical forms of relationality, or *ubuntu* in the African context—personhood and humanity where *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*³—may be deciphered as “communities of being.” A collectivist and humanizing relationality 430 435

²South Africa’s ruling party.

of this kind is thus crucial to conceptualizing the psychopolitics and ethicopolitics of healing praxis in reference to being Black in the world (Suffla & Seedat, 2021). For Biko (2004), interrelationship and solidarity thus framed are fundamental to the very condition of possibility for being-in-the-world; this is at the heart of the humaning and relational accountability that the decolonial and Fanonian oath bespeaks. 440

The transcendence of practice in the ways that we articulate here, with the attendant turn to a decolonial and Fanonian oath for healing, could be said to be a methodology of decolonial love (see Sandoval, 2000). Fanon's (2008) declaration that "Today I believe in the possibility of love" (p. 28) exhorts a commitment to creating alternatives founded in the psychopolitics and ethicopolitics of liberation. Such an envisioning is embodied in a praxis of decolonial love that fortifies the struggle of the condemned for liberation and makes possible the (re)imagining of psychical, material, and epistemic restitution, political reparations, community rapprochement, and liberatory futurities (see Fanon Mendès France, 2016, 2020; Figueroa, 2015). Taken from the decolonial attitude, thus, the imperative of disalienation necessitates historicized and ruptural praxis that assumes forms of political struggle against the dehumanization of the condemned and toward the enduring process of healing the wounds of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2008, 2016a, 2017b, 2021). 445 450

Our instantiation here of transcendence of practice is to place it in conversation with the imperatives of contemporary psychoanalytic practice, and other health and healing frameworks too. Notwithstanding the incompleteness, fluidity, tensions, and contradictions inherent to this work, which sometimes position it precariously between the forces of disobedience and collusion, our illustration points to possibilities in breaching disciplinary, professional, and institutional circumscriptions to allow for liberatory responses to "the demands of a world that transcends the self" (Gordon, 2021, p. 55). This then, Gordon (2021) argues, is not only to search the question of liberation *from* but critically to probe that of liberation *for*, a point that is also crucial in Catherine Walsh's masterful explanation of "the decolonial *for*," which is based on her outstanding trajectory as militant, intellectual, and educator (see Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). In the context of the current reading, Maldonado-Torres (2021) offers the provocation that ultimately it is in forms of counterpsychology (or psychoanalysis), and even an abandoning of discipline and profession, that we may truly be able to "discover the face of another human behind the masks" (p. xiii). 455 460 465

Conclusion

The path from the Hippocratic oath to what we have referred to here as the Fanonian oath for healing represents a challenge to the medical profession and to the human sciences, including psychoanalysis. Grounded on a view of Western modernity as demographic, symbolic, material, and metaphysical catastrophe, this oath requires the collective challenge of the psychic, social, structural, and cultural foundations of the antiblack modern/colonial world. That the imperatives that lead to and that are reinforced in the Fanonian oath are inscribed in the decolonial attitude indicates that they apply as much to healers as to theoreticians and cultural producers. Together they can form part of communities of liberation engaged in "multidimensional investigations" that are connected to processes of decolonial transformation. Decolonization means not only to undo colonization, but also to build the world of you in the very process of coming together to change the world. Acting, thinking, creating, and healing for self and collective transformation and decolonization cannot take place outside of that context. The authors of this text include healers, activists, and theoreticians who continue to explore ways of transcending the disciplines that have sought to confine them. They remain convinced that this cannot be done by keeping their respective areas of practice and interest separate from each other, or themselves at a distance from grassroots communities and collectives who aim to counter 470 475 480

³Nguni Bantu phrase meaning a person is a person through other persons.

catastrophe and to build a different world. This is our encouragement to others who are on a similar path, and our call for others to consider joining us.

Disclosure statement

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Notes on contributors

Nelson Maldonado-Torres is a professor in the Department of Latino and Caribbean Studies, Chair of the Comparative Literature Program, faculty affiliate in the Graduate Program in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Director of the Advanced Institute for Critical Caribbean Studies at Rutgers University, New Brunswick. He is also Professor Extraordinary at the Institute for Social and Health Sciences, University of South Africa, an honorary professor at the University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, and Co-chair of the Frantz Fanon Foundation. He specializes in transdisciplinary decolonial thought, race theory, and in the work of Frantz Fanon. His publications include several book projects, journal articles, essay collections, and guest-edited journal special issues. He also collaborates with the Blackhouse Collective in South Africa on Black consciousness and decoloniality.

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Mireille Fanon Mendès France is the co-chair of the Frantz Fanon Foundation.

Shahnaaz Suffla is an associate professor at the University of South Africa, senior researcher affiliated to the South African Medical Research Council, and President-Elect of the Psychological Society of South Africa. Her thinking and scholarship are influenced by the vision of research as a transforming, humanizing, and decolonizing enterprise. Her research interests include a focus on community-engaged interventions in contexts of structural and epistemic violence, participatory engagement as a site of activism, resistance and social change, and Africa-centered knowledges and knowledge-making. Shahnaaz has numerous publications in her areas of interest. She is a reviewer and editorial team member for select journals, including *Journal of Community Psychology*, *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, *Community Psychology in Global Perspective*, *Feminism and Psychology*, and *Social and Health Sciences*.

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Mohamed Seedat heads the Institute for Social and Health Sciences at the University of South Africa (UNISA). He directed the Violence, Injury and Peace Promotion Research Unit, a national UNISA and South African Medical Research Council initiative, for 19 years. His current scholarship revolves around liberation, critical and decolonial community-social psychology, the social anatomy of protests, emancipatory approaches to health, safety and peace promotion, psychologies underlying large-scale sociopolitical transformation in "postcolonial" contexts, transdisciplinary knowledge architectures, and indigenous knowledge-making spaces. Mohamed continues to support community-engaged research, the capacitation of next generation socially engaged researchers and academic leaders, and the transformation of writing cultures in the academy. Mohamed is a member of numerous professional bodies, including the Academy of Science of South Africa.

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Kopano Ratele is professor of psychology at the University of Stellenbosch and Head of the Stellenbosch Centre for Critical and Creative Thought. He has published extensively, and his books include *There Was This Goat: Investigating the Truth Commission Testimony of Notrose Nobomvu Konile* (2009, co-authored with Antjie Krog and Nosisi Mpolweni), *Liberating Masculinities* (2016), *Engaging Youth in Activism, Research and Pedagogical Praxis: Transnational and Intersectional Perspectives on Gender, Sex, and Race* (2018, co-edited with Jeff Hearn, Tammy Shefer, and Floretta Boonzaier), and *The World Looks Like This From Here: Thoughts on African Psychology* (2019).

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