Refuting Melancholia: Postures Of Melancholic Identification In The Apartheid Archive

Abstract.
This paper, the second of two focussed on the libidinal attachments of white children to black domestic workers in narratives contributed to the *Apartheid Archive Project (AAP)*, considers the applicability of the concept of social melancholia in the case of such "inter-racial" attachments. The paper questions both the psychoanalytic accuracy, and the psychic and political legitimacy of such an explanation (that is, the prospect of an "inter-racial" melancholic attachment of white subjects to black care-takers). By contrast to the political notion of ungrievable melancholic losses popularized by Judith Butler's work, this paper develops a theory of compensatory symbolic identifications. Such a theory explains the apparent refusal of identification which white subjects exhibit towards black caretakers and it throws into perspective an important conceptual distinction regards loss. On the one hand there is the psychotic mechanism of melancholic attachment, which expresses absolute fidelity to a lost object, even to the point of self-destructive suffering. On the other, there is the neurotic mechanism of compensatory identification, in which the original object is jettisoned and a substitution found, such that a broader horizon of symbolic and ideological identification is enabled.

Introduction
The companion piece (*see: Rozenberg Quarterly*) to the current paper investigated a series of Apartheid Archive narratives via the means of psychoanalytic reading practice. That paper and this one share a similar aim: of shedding light on certain of apartheid's "lost attachments". The analytical undertaking of a mode of psychoanalytic discourse analysis is not, of course, a-theoretical, and at least one crucial facet of the texts considered – their ostensibly mournful as aspect – begs further conjecture. In supplementing the foregoing article then, I am shifting here from a focus on specific strategies of textual reading practice to a critical exploration of the usefulness of a key psychoanalytic concept in the illumination of these texts. The first of these two papers engaged

with the "dathow one might psychoanalytically read the repression of libidinal attachments via certain absent mediators. The current paper comprises an extended theoretical development of psychoanalytically reading a political situation of loss and how this should be conceptualized.

The Apartheid Archive, a collaborative research project that collects and analyses narratives of early experiences of apartheid racism, features a significant number of white contributors speaking tentatively of bonds of "inter-racial" intimacy between white children and black child-minders. A number of these narratives are characterized by a melancholy tone, and I want to pose the question here as to whether such lost attachments might be understood via the notion of melancholic loss that has become so popular in the postcolonial literature (Eng & Han, 1996; Chen, 2000; Khanna, 2003; Gilroy, 2004). I want to question the usefulness of the notion of melancholia as a mode of social formation in the context of the Apartheid Archive texts.

The forerunner to this paper, the companion piece with which it is paired (*see: Rozenberg Quarterly*), contained two lengthy textual extracts from narratives contributed to the Apartheid Archive that I will again refer to here. In the first of narratives, reference was made to a man called Dyson, of whom the narrator recalls:
I don't know how and when a change occurred – even for sure that one did – but I do remember at a certain point becoming excessively formal with him, avoidant, distanced, as if a type of enacted superiority and distance had become necessary … This still puzzles me: at what point was it that I became rigid, aware of the need to keep myself apart, to be aloof … The time came when the decision was made to leave Zimbabwe … I could not now break the façade and run up to him and hug him goodbye. I needed now to maintain the self-conscious role of distance … My lack of demonstrativeness may simply have been a case of not knowing how … not being able – certainly not within the codes of white racist masculinity – to express love for Dyson … The words 'I loved Dyson' seem both historically true and yet not subjectively real; factual, and yet difficult to personalize … [W]here in my childhood unconscious did I place Dyson…. Was Dyson my "other daddy" (conceivable perhaps as the good, ever-present daddy relative to the strict white daddy who seemed at times less approachable)?

It is intriguing to note the similarity between certain of the words chosen here and Butler's (1997) description in her now canonical account of melancholy

gender. The relevant phrase in the extract, to recall, is: "The words 'I loved Dyson' seem both historically true and yet not subjectively real". The relevant section of Butler's account comes when she addresses the predicament of living in a culture which can mourn the loss of certain (homosexual, or, potentially "cross-racial") attachment only with great difficulty. I have made several key substitutions in the following quotes, "cross-racial"**[i]** for "homosexual", "racial" for "sexual", etc, so as to further underscore the pertinence of her argument to the present case (the structure of Butler's argument remains, of course, unchanged):
"[I]s [a cross-racial attachment] regarded as a 'true' love, a 'true' loss, a love and loss worthy and capable of being grieved … of having been lived? Or is it a love and a loss haunted by the spectre of a certain unreality, a certain unthinkability, the double disavowal of the … *'I never loved him, I never lost him'*. Is this the 'never-never' that supports the naturalized surface of … [the life of racialized difference]? Is it the disavowal of loss by which [racial] formation … proceeds?" (Butler, 1997: 138, emphasis added).

It is the disavowing refrain, "I never loved him, I never lost him", which most pertinently echoes the words in the Apartheid Archive narrative. In order to appreciate this resonance one needs to combine the content of the narrative, the words "I loved", with the author's apparent relationship to them, namely the apparent sense of non-reality. It is only in this way, juxtaposing, the content of the statement with the author's *position* of enunciation, that one grasps the stuckness of these lines, the aspect of simultaneous affirmation and denial, the fact that there has been an actual loss, which has nonetheless, been held in suspension, not fully processed.

If one accepts then that a prohibition on cross-racial ties of love and identification operates within racist culture – I am paraphrasing and adapting Butler (1997) here – then the loss of cross-racial love would appear foreclosed from the start. Of course, one needs to bear in mind that what counts as the start would be retroactively constituted at a point following initial foreclosure. Butler (1997: 139) makes precisely this point, remarking that her use of the term "foreclosed" suggests "a pre-emptive loss, a mourning for unlived possibilities. If this love is from the start out of the question, then it cannot happen, and if it does, it certainly did not. If it does, it happens only under the official sign of its prohibition and disavowal."

It is worth stressing the factor of an after-the-fact effacement, that is, the retroactive capacity of the foreclosure Butler alludes to. This is important not only in view of the above example – where clearly there was an initial experience of loss – but also so as to make the point that despite their seemingly "impossibility" within apartheid, such cross-racial ties and desires most certainly did exist, even if subsequent forms of psychic erasure ensure that, effectively, they did not.

Butler (1997: 139) specifies the location of the melancholia in question which exists always in tandem with societal proscription:
"When … [such] losses are compelled by a set of culturally prevalent prohibitions, we might expect a culturally prevalent form of melancholia, one which signals the internalization of the ungrieved and ungrievable [cross-racial] cathexis. And where there is no public recognition or discourse through which such a loss might be named and mourned, then melancholia takes on cultural dimensions."

To think melancholia as cultural formation is to appreciate how psychical operations and social structure combine in ways which cannot be reduced to the singular level of the individual subject. Formations of cultural melancholia would thus appear – in this adaptation of Butler's (1997: 140) argument – to go hand in hand with strident demarcations of racial difference:
"it is not simply a matter of a individual's unwillingness to avow and hence to grieve [cross-racial] attachments. When the prohibition against [cross-racial attachments] is culturally pervasive, then the 'loss' of … [such] love is precipitated through a prohibition which is repeated and ritualized throughout the culture. What ensures is a culture of … melancholy in which … [categories of racial difference] emerge as the traces of an ungrieved and ungrievable love."

Butler's (adapted) formulations seem particularly apposite in (post)apartheid contexts within which white children have formed significant if subsequently foreclosed bonds of attachment with black child-minders. While one may have expected a lessening of racial difference by virtue of such proximities, it seems, more often than not, that exactly the opposite was and is the case (Ally, 2009, 2011; Shefer, 2012). What makes little intuitive sense – the fact that the development of loving ties does not necessarily minimize notions of difference, but somehow appears to consolidate them – is apparently given a dynamic explanation in Butler's work.

An important amendment needs to be made before we progress. As is by now

perhaps apparent, we cannot simply transfer Butler's notion of melancholy gender to the domain of racial difference. In Butler's model, crucially, the lost yet unconsciously retained object is itself the basis of a powerful identification. The melancholic object shines through; it propels identification: the more I cannot have a given (homosexual) object, the more I identify with, and become like them. For this reason "it comes as no surprise that the more hyperbolic and defensive a masculine identification, the more fierce the ungrieved homosexual cathexis" (Butler, 1997: 139). This, incidentally, is a thoroughly orthodox Freudian idea, as is the notion that the object of failed love relation can be retained and internalized as the basis for an enduring identification (this is what Freud (1921), in his *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego*, dubs "regressive identification"). This factor is shared in the prospective "melancholic" inscription of heterosexuality and racial difference alike: the operation of a *refused identification* (be it with the opposite sex, or with a "different" race) is crucial in substantiating an exclusive identification (with the same sex or race). However, while in the case of foreclosed cross-racial ties, a prospective avenue of identification is likewise refused, the "ungrieved" object *does not itself become the model of an identification* but supports instead a compensatory identification of a different order. In other words, the idea of foreclosed cross-racial attachments involves not an unconscious identification with, but the very opposite, a refusal of identification with, the lost object.

The responses to loss are different in each case. In the first instance (the melancholic inscription of heterosexuality) what has been loved and lost is carried within the subject as a loss that blocks any further attachments of the same kind. The route to new attachments of a similar sort has been barred. The melancholic remains one with its lost object which by now has been folded into the ego, and that object, kept in place, effectively voids the possibility of particular loves. (It is this element of Freud's account – the barring of further attachments on the basis of an unprocessed incorporation – that Butler's conceptualization of cultural melancholia depends on). One appreciates thus the elegance of Butler's argument: what could be a better way of ensuring subjective compliance to social prohibition than by securing such proscriptions on the basis of unmetabolized losses? What results from this operation is a series of libidinal embargos which effectively designate a field of ineligible objects. The intractability of this interweaving of social prohibition and unconscious foreclosure provides us with a profound instance of the psychic life of power. As a possible strategy of recovery,

this response to loss cannot but be considered a failure, for the very obvious reason that it permits for no recovery at all: rather than loss being gradually assimilated into reality, reality itself is assimilated into loss.

I will return shortly to the distinction between two different modes of loss. Although I do borrow facets of Butler's theorization in what follows, I will stress different psychical mechanisms underlying the "cross-racial" attachments and refused identifications being discussed. What I propose is not that we dismiss Butler's account, but that we extract both what is most psychoanalytically defensible, and most helpful in respect of an analysis of the Apartheid Archive narratives in question.

Doubting Melancholia

The question of how reliably this conceptualization of melancholia may be applied in the present case is a tricky one. Before entering into such deliberations it is worthwhile stating a series of critical arguments that beg the question of whether such a notion of societal melancholia is in fact psychoanalytically viable. I want to follow a dual type of analysis here, simultaneously pursuing and questioning the line of analysis Butler offers in *The psychic life of power*. Indeed, as pertinent as Butler's account is, it does, I think, suffer from a discharacterization, as does much of the work which takes up the Freudian topic of melancholia as a means of understanding socio-cultural conditions.

Bluntly put, in most cases what are taken to be societal instantiations of melancholia are, quite simply, not cases of melancholia at all, certainly insofar as we remain faithful to Freud's (1917) initial clinical formulations. Freud's account of melancholia cannot be reduced to a state of ungrieved loss; such a conflation appears frequently in Butler's (1997) discussion. Melancholia is more than just the failure of mourning, more than a prolonged non-resolution of loss, states which, incidentally, can be easily romanticized. It is for this reason that Crociani-Windland and Hoggett (2012: 165) observe that "Sometimes writers in [the] post-colonial tradition appear to confuse melancholia with melancholy". Whereas melancholy "is part of the sweet sadness of loss", melancholia is by contrast "the bleak, visceral, agitated, desperate existence of a loss with no name" (ibid).

Freudian melancholia necessarily involves hostility towards a lost object that has been withdrawn into the ego. It entails the sufferer's assault upon this lost object which, via the means of narcissistic regression, has been incorporated into the

ego. These then are the conditions under which a relation to the lost object may be maintained, conditions which amount to a crippling state of internalized aggression. A constituent component of melancholia – far more difficult to romanticize than states of ungrieved loss – is the fact of a loathing, self-*abjecting* relation to one's own ego that has been deemed worthless and opened up to the punitive fury of the super-ego (Freud, 1932). A form of suffering tantamount to being buried with the dead, melancholia cannot be summarily equated merely with blockages of identification, with states of unending remembrance (see for example how the concept is utilized in the political writings of Moon, 1995; Muñoz, 1997; Novak, 1999). The phenomenology and clinical structure of melancholia present a completely different picture (Lander, 2006; Leader, 2008). As Verhaeghe's (2004) brief gloss makes clear, the presiding features of melancholia – clamorous self-denunciation, convictions of inner worthlessness, the impetus to selfpunishment – seem to hold little of promise for increased political awareness or action.The melancholic subject, condemned to a type of nonexistence "takes the entire guilt of the world onto its shoulders, and this is the sole reason for … [their] existence … [The condition is characterized by] all-encompassing guilt and its accompanying need for punishment invariably display[s] a delusional character … The subject disappears, is reduced to nothing (Verhaeghe, 2004: 455-456).

Of course, many of the authors who adapt Freud's notion, transforming its destructive qualities into something productive, into the "militant preservation of the lost object" (Eng & Han, 2003: 363), do so intentionally. Muñoz (1997: 355-56) for example argues that "for blacks and queers … melancholia [is] not a pathology … a self-absorbed mood that inhibits activism, but …. a mechanism that helps us (re)construct identity and take our dead to the various battles we must wage in their names". Frosh (2012a: 7) provides an adroit summary of such re-appropriations of the notion of melancholia:

"Melancholia – severe depression – feeds on itself, consuming the person until there is nothing left … Against this unpromising backdrop, melancholia has been resurfacing as a paradigm of subversion, an instance of how what is written out as a profound negative can be reinterpreted as a call to arms … The key element in this re-reading of the productive possibilities of melancholia is not the issue of self-hatred, but rather the [preservation of the object] … In melancholia …. there is no recognition of the lost object … it exists 'in' the unconscious as something

which cannot be grieved because it is never acknowledged … [Melancholia] preserves the object precisely because the object is never grieved. That is, whereas mourning deals with object loss and integrates the object into the subject's psychic life, dissolving it so that it becomes a part of the subject, melancholia can be read as an act of refusal on the part of the object to be taken up and destroyed in this way."

What this means is that many of the constituent elements of the clinical picture of melancholia sketched above – particularly the relentless internalized self-violence – are screened out of postcolonial engagements with the topic. Such adaptations as a rule emphasize the non-digested incorporation of the lost object, and of course the facet of ungrievable loss, but then sidestep the resultant reflexive dynamic – the broader libidinal economy – of radical self-hate which ensures that melancholia is always more than a facet of identification.

What becomes evident then is the importance of distinguishing between *forms of identification* which have a melancholic character and the pathological *condition of melancholia* in and of itself. Both such uses are of course apparent in Freud's (1917, 1921, 1923) own work. Nonetheless, this distinction, so often lacking in the spiralling literature on postcolonial melancholia, nonetheless deserves reiteration. On the one hand we are concerned with melancholia as diagnostic structure, a pathological assumption of the place of the dead which consigns the melancholic to a state of purgatory. On the other we have in mind a *mode of identification* in which lost objects are retained as a way of building the ego. Although this may sound like a small qualification it is vital, separating as it does a psychotic condition from an everyday modality of identification present in each and every ego. This clinical distinction will have important ramifications, as we will go on to see, both in respect of how we understand the social application of melancholia and in terms of how we under the question of "cross-racial" attachments as addressed in this paper.

Forter's (2003) essay "*Against melancholia*" isolates two reoccurring problems that characterize much of the literature that attempts a rehabilitation of the notion. The first pivots on a crucial misunderstanding, namely the idea that mourning entails a forgetting, relinquishing, indeed, the apparent *erasure* of the lost object which is thus consigned to the oblivion of non-memory. Once such a categorization is in place, melancholia can be pictured as the only method for the faithful preservation of the object. Brophy's (2002: 267) assertion of melancholia

“as mechanism of memory” able to resist the “recuperative pressures” of prevailing prescriptions of gender, race and class, is an apt case in point. What such a view (purposefully?) overlooks is the fact that what has been lost remains unconscious to the melancholic. The “melancholic’s unconscious incorporation … *prevents* the object from being remembered, in part because it confuses self and other”, a confusion which makes it near impossible “for the other to become an object of memory or consciousness” (Forter, 2003: 138). Mourning, in short, is not tantamount to forgetting. Insofar as it involves a systematic work of detachment from the lost object, mourning can in fact be viewed as a precondition for the memorialisation of this object. Mourning enables a gradual differentiation between ego and object, a state when the ego is no longer completely fused with the object; in this way it is the basis for remembrance.

The depathologizing of melancholia, furthermore, risks encouraging a misguided celebration, indeed, the collective cultivation of a state characterized by “*numb disconnection and a self-loathing whose logical conclusion is suicide*” (Forter, 2003: 139). What is in question here is not only a complete evasion of the affective reality of melancholia, but of theoretical conjecture completely over-riding the reality of lived experience in a way that encourages “a collective self-hatred whose progressive implications are far from clear” (ibid).

One may extend the above critique by posing a question to such celebratory treatments of melancholia: to what ends – ideological, self-justificatory – is this object, this proposed melancholic attachment, being used? If it has a pragmatic function, serving perhaps as a support of identity, as an argumentative warrant or some or other sort, then it would seem less than truly melancholic. This would be less a case of ethical fidelity to the object and more an instance of its instrumental use. If the latter is indeed the case, then we are most likely dealing with a fetishistic rather than melancholic object.

Frosh (2012b: 41) highlights a further drawback of such valorizing conceptualizations:
“[I]n imagining the existence of a lost object that can … be “recovered”, a mythology is created … a kind of romance of origin that can be called on to establish the distinctiveness … to which the group can return”. The danger is that “what is produced is something fantasmagoric and potentially reactionary, the lost object becoming [thus] … a call back to a neverland of imagined time” (ibid). Forter (2003: 163-64) adds to this the warning that “the hostile component of

melancholic ambivalence is often displaced onto convenient scapegoats". This is a pronounced risk inasmuch as the ego in and of itself can, as Butler (1997) intimates, never be a wholly satisfying substitute for the lost and now hated object. There are thus, for Forter (2003: 143), serious political risks in attempting to utilize melancholia for progressive ends, particularly given the possibility of "the channelling of melancholic rage toward the socially vulnerable".

Contrived losses

Having developed this critique of how melancholia has often been applied, we may now return to a more focussed discussion of the Apartheid Archive narratives. We might follow Butler half of the way here, accepting her thoughts on barred love and identification, but stopping short of assuming the full machinery of the model of melancholia. In light of the above critique, we might suggest that Butler most helps us to see is less a type of melancholic cultural disposition, than patterns of *refused identification*. The key here is not so much the lost relationship that remains unmourned, internalized; this fact is of secondary importance relative to *the identification it shores up*. So, rather than a given formation of identification being the outcome of a more pervasive and general condition of melancholia, I will offer that refused identification is the primary phenomenon here, which may or may not have a melancholic quality to it.

Turning back then to the narrative material discussed above, we might now pose a series of more focussed questions. Firstly, are we dealing with a properly "ungrieved" or unconscious loss, or, a thoroughly conscious, declarable loss? In the narrative cited above we are surely dealing with *conscious* losses, conscious enough that they can be explored in a form of public writing (certainly, in texts destined for an archive). Of course, one can argue that in the Dyson text there is grief, even if held in abeyance and never fully declared given the apparent absence – at the time – of any "public recognition or discourse through which such a loss might be named and mourned" (Butler, 1997: 139). The spectre of unreality that Butler speaks of seems apparent here. We need to keep open the possibility that the remorse admitted prior to this point may not have been significantly registered, hence its return here in an unresolved form. That is to say, the difficulty of distinguishing between conscious and unconscious losses is not as simple as it may appear, especially given Freud's (1917) memorable declaration that the melancholic knows full well *whom* they have lost, just not *what* they have lost in them. So, in the cases of Phyllis and Dyson, what appears

to be a conscious loss may nonetheless be tied by an invisible thread to a lost quality that cannot be retrieved. This is part of what ties the melancholic so inextricably to the dead: the fact that they do not know and cannot represent exactly what has been lost. This loss, furthermore, is not delimited, differentiable in its relation to other libidinal objects, which is to say that it is effectively the loss of everything.

The counter-argument here is that what we are dealing with are contrived losses, experienced only after the fact, as a way of the narrator's attempts to rehabilitate an image of themselves not wholly reducible to the racist social relations of the time. In this respect the double temporality of the extracts, written in a decidedly post-apartheid voice, of apartheid-era experiences, is undoubtedly a factor. Whereas, during apartheid, there was no adequate social framework or representational space to support this mourning – which, as such, was never fully processed, never supported by broad symbolic recognition – the discursive context of post-apartheid South Africa entails a very different set of imperatives. What we can safely assume is required of such white post-apartheid retellings is that the narrator invoke at least the possibility of a mourning, providing thus the "proof" of feelings of a humanity not wholly determined by racism. It seems after all true that in both cases there is a suspension of remorse an odd resignation – even, ultimately, disinterestedness – with reference to the lost libidinal attachment that, in the final analysis, appears dispensable. As such we might ask: is this attitude the result of foreclosed attachments that meant such losses did not count more significantly, or, more disturbingly, was this "foreclosure" simply due to a racist under-valuation of the person in question? More directly: is this more a case of mimed melancholia than a melancholia of an ostensibly "ethical" sort?

If there is a properly melancholic aspect to these reminiscences of Dyson and Phyllis, then it would be characterized, in clinical terms, by a blockage of retrieval that Freud (1917) described by means of his distinction between word- and thing-presentations. If there was a melancholic loss evidenced by the texts, it would not present in an obvious way, but would instead be only *symptomatically* apparent, being in and of itself effectively unrepresentable. What this means is that if there is a melancholic loss here it is probably not the loss specified (or implied) as such by the subject. Let us leave this intriguing possibility – of a hitherto undeclared loss shadowing the screen memory of a declarable loss – to one side so as to bring a series of further theoretical issues into focus.

Compensatory (Symbolic) Identifications

I want now to revisit the idea of the two responses to loss that I posed earlier on. The first of these was melancholic and it entailed an unprocessed loss blocking the making of further attachments. This delimiting of attachments would certainly pertain to sexual object-choice, the field of objects similar to the object lost would be effectively off-limits, but it would also foster an exclusive type of identification. The second response to loss, in which I stressed the factor of refused identification, involved the making of identifications of an altogether different order. Such identifications involve a point of reference beyond the domain of the original subject-object relation. It is worth emphasizing that in this second mode of response – – by contrast far more socially-adaptive, psychically-expedient than the first – what has been loved and lost propels a need for compensatory identifications *precisely not with the lost object* itself. The trajectory of identification is directed towards a symbolic locus beyond the delimited parameters of the relation between the grieving subject and the lost object. This symbolic identification – I will provide examples as we continue – helps disavow the painful significance of the loss and it enables the location of more suitable object-investments. The logic is not "what I loved and lost I now carry within me". It is not, in other words, a form of fidelity to the lost object which is maintained even at the price of the self-ravaging subjectivity of the melancholic. It is rather the logic of rejection, of "what I have loved and lost I now leave behind". Rather than a mechanism of blockage that prevents further libidinal ties, this is a relation – perhaps akin to abjection – of repulsion, a rejection of the object whose value is now drastically diminished and denied. It is a rejection, furthermore, that accordingly compels the search for replacement objects to assume the now vacant place of the lost object. In the first – that is, melancholic – response to loss, pain is extended indefinitely. The fidelity of the melancholic, we might venture, is not only to a lost object, but also to *the pain inflicted by its loss.*

In the second (non-melancholic) response there is, by notable contrast, amelioration; there is no fidelity to the object; the object is instead demeaned, de-valued in comparison to a series of narcissistically-bound, "closer to home" object-investments. We are dealing, in this latter case, more than anything else, with a defensive operation which deals with loss by replacement, by means of a narcissistic over-evaluation of the ego and its adjourning field of objects and symbolic values. It may well entail a mournful posture, but it is by no means melancholic.

A distinctive relation to the world of symbolic articulation is involved in each of these two cases. I have already stressed that the refused identification that I take to be the predominant factor in the above narratives – a type of "identification on the rebound" – involves a push towards symbolic identifications beyond the immediate subject-object relation. This amounts to an opening up of a broader socio-symbolic horizon. The unprocessed losses of melancholia, by contrast, are pathological losses that are denied social articulation and symbolic comprehension. Such losses are effectively shortcircuited, reflexively arcing back upon the ego which becomes the target of its own punishment. They cannot, furthermore, be adequately expressed given that the disjunction between object- and word-presentation affords no articulation of what has been lost. It is precisely in this respect that the precision of the existing Freudian (1917) clinical model of melancholia – too easily dismissed by more celebratory treatments of the notion – proves so vital. In the Dyson and Phyllis examples we are dealing with a thoroughly *neurotic* loss. This is not a seizing up of the ego, or an inability to make further investments (libidinal cathexes) in the external world. It represents instead a flourishing of symbolic identifications – such as that of a vegetarian anti-apartheid novelist in the Phyllis narrative – that reach beyond the confines of the ego-object dyad.

To be sure, I am not suggesting that no loss has occurred, or that it is negligible. I am stressing rather that this is a type of loss that has been managed via various repressions and substitutions, that it is a non-psychotic loss which thus can be dealt with within the terms of the prevailing symbolic and thus ideological order. However, to claim that we are dealing with a neurotic loss incurs a question. Is this not a contradictory response, especially given Butler's (1997: 139) suggestive idea – accurate I think, in the context of our examples – that within the given socio-political condition, there is no adequate "public recognition or discourse through which such a loss might be named". While no adequate discourse may have existed to express the lost "inter-racial" intimacy, what certainly did exist was the broader symbolic network of possible identifications through which a relation to prevailing familial or community roles was still retained, indeed, affirmed. A case in point may be located in this paper's companion piece, in that article's discussion of animal mediators, of fantasy as a means of responding to discursive impasse. The resulting "answers" to the dilemma of how the white child is to locate themselves in such "inter-racial" relationships seemed precisely to affirm existing community roles and familial positions, neutralizing rather than

radicalizing moments of social contradiction.

One further detail from the Phyllis extract proves, in retrospect, telling. Whereas a type of identification certainly does seem to be set in motion here, it is not of a melancholic sort – the prospective identification with Phyllis seems to have been thoroughly "metabolized" – but, as noted in the previous paper, of a hysterical sort, an identification with the place of the other. The narrator needs to be taken at face value when she declares: "I am not Phyllis". Phyllis as lost object is a stepping stone, a means to an end; she enables an altogether different identification (that of the novelwriting, anti-apartheid white heroine) and is discarded in the process. This, interestingly, gives us a different perspective on a facet of the narrative that has not as yet been emphasized, namely, the fact that the narrator apparently refuses to eat the chicken. What is important in this respect is not so much what actually happened, but the fact that *it is included by the narrator in the text*. It is difficult to avoid the Freudian symbolism here, in terms of which such "cannibalistic" incorporation is considered as a primal form of identification. The message that might thus be read out of the text is thus as direct as it is counter-intuitive: an introjection is refused, or, more to the point, there is a refusal of Phyllis as object of identification.

The importance of the distinction I am drawing – between what we might call ethical as opposed to mimed forms of melancholia – is by now apparent. The ethical quality of a properly melancholic attachment is qualified by two conditions, one of which is all too easily overlooked in celebratory affirmations of the notion. Firstly, by an absolute fidelity to what has been lost, that is, by the state of suspended, ungrieved loss so often reiterated in the literature. Secondly, by the fact – less frequently stressed – that this fidelity comes at a price. The melancholic tie is one of great pain, even of destruction. The unconscious persistence of a preserved libidinal attachment is not, in and of itself, an ethical matter. (A great many attachments presumably persist in non-pathological forms; no libidinal tie is easily relinquished). When the preservation of such a tie puts one's own existence at risk however, then an altogether different order of ethical commitment is in question. By contrast, the neurotic strategy of compensatory identifications and substitute objects is at best a type of "mimed melancholia" in which attachments to the object are jettisoned in the name of recovery. So, while in such a case we are confronted with a kind of betrayal, the second killing of the object – and here I am recasting terms used by Žižek (2000) in his critique of how

the notion of melancholia is often applied – the melancholic subject, by contrast, remains faithful to it, refusing at all costs to renounce their attachment to it. The importance of Žižek's (2000: 658-659) contribution is that he simultaneously underlines the unconditional ethical quality of the melancholic while castigating opportunistic recourse to the trope of the melancholic:

"[One should] denounce the objective cynicism that … a rehabilitation of melancholy enacts. The melancholic link to the lost ethnic Object allows us to claim that we remain faithful to our ethnic roots while fully participating in the global capitalist game … what is wrong with postcolonial nostalgia is not the dream of a world … [one] never had (such a utopia can be thoroughly liberating) but the way this dream is used to legitimize the actuality of its very opposite, of the full and unconstrained participation in global capitalism."

Or, put in the terms of our current concerns: brandishing the badge of a "cross-racial" melancholic attachment allows one to mitigate to one's self the ongoing racial divisions that one continues to live by.

Unexpected identifications

In retrospect one cannot but be struck by the struggle of identification that is writ large in the above narratives. These texts are, in many respects, far less about lost attachments than about white subjectivities locating a pole of identification amidst the complications posed by apartheid's insistence on racial difference and in view of the post-apartheid declaration that such apparent differences *do not matter*. This observation allows us to return to an assertion made above with regard to a third point of identification, that is, to the topic of symbolic identification that occurs outside of the confines of the truncated ego-object relation obtaining in melancholia. Making such an analytical distinction is vital from a psychoanalytic perspective. It makes the point that identification resides not merely where we might like it to, with whom we might like to, or on the basis of an obvious affective tie; a symbolic identification may over-ride all of these relatively "psychologistic" considerations, and it may exist unconsciously, as an attachment to a symbolic frame itself.

This distinction can be illustrated with reference to the Phyllis narrative, in which, as noted in the foregoing paper, we see the interplay of various forms of identification. After an initial reading, one might treat the hysterical Phyllis-identification as primary. I would argue, by contrast, that the more substantive

identification, for which the temporary and imaginary Phyllis identification is merely a conduit, is symbolic in nature, indeed, that it is an exemplary case of the opening up of a broader socio-symbolic horizon. I have in mind here of course the identification as *anti-apartheid writer*, which, like all symbolic identifications, is an identification beyond any one single person, and identification that maintains a strong historical trajectory, in the sense that it both extends into the future – providing thus a career, a vocation – and links back to a lineage. Such a symbolic identification is far more robust than the more transitory stuff of imaginary identifications; it provides the structuring component which underlies and delimits the ebb and flow of inter-subjective identifications. Symbolic identification plays the role of the anchor that grounds the subject to a longstanding series of traditional, communal and cultural values.

Two important implications follow on from this conceptualization of identification. Firstly, this identification – identification as anti-apartheid novelist – dilutes the radicalism of the apparent identification with Phyllis and the fanciful sexual fantasies associated with it. This is not only because the identification in question is thoroughly acceptable and socially admired – it is hard to think of a more *bourgeois* and less revolutionary preoccupation than that of a novelist. but also because such an identification recontextualizes the earlier Phyllis identification as precisely imaginary, as work of fiction. Furthermore, we might contend that such an identification is essentially *an identification with the symbolic itself,* certainly so inasmuch it would allow the subject to take on the position of one able to *produce symbolic fictions*. The discomforting although by no means necessary implication here is that such a subject would be one that contributes to, rather than dismantles, the socio-symbolic conditions of the apartheid social formation in question.

We might extend these speculations on symbolic identification by turning back to the Dyson narrative. In Truscott's (2012) engagement with this text **[ii]**, he argues that there is – perhaps contrary to the narrator's wishes – no real identification with Dyson. The identification lies instead with the "strict white daddy who seemed at times less than approachable". While there is little evidence that the narrator has made this connection, namely that it is a paternal identification rather than the loss of a "cross-racial" bond that predominates in this text, a crucial facet of such an identification is clearly evident: the conferral of a trait. It is precisely the father's lamented quality of being inaccessible,

unapproachable, that the narrator enacts with respect to Dyson. So, advances Truscott (2012), while the loss of the relationship with Dyson might here be negotiated in all sincerity, Dyson is in fact "a secondary cast member on stage where a[n] … identification with the father plays out", indeed, the aloofness to Dyson could be "exactly a sign of an identification with the lost white father".

Truscott's (2012) line of argument would concur with my own insofar as it suggests a more substantive form of identification occurring beyond the bounds of the relationship with Dyson. Whereas I have termed this a form of symbolic identification activated in a compensatory manner – the assumption being that it is intensified by the loss of Dyson – Truscott rightly intimates that such an identification may have pre-empted, even caused the loss of the imagined relationship with Dyson. The text itself, perhaps unwittingly, includes reference to this point of change brought on by the identification with the father. This provides a nice example of psychoanalytic reading practice, of the double-reading of a text, because the change the author has in mind is the change of his relationship with Dyson which he appears to view as disconnected with the relation to the father. As Truscott puts it, referring to the words of the narrator: "The identification with the father is marked here (the 'change' being the onset of the loss of, and identification with, the father)":

I don't know how and when a change occurred – even for sure that one did – but I do remember at a certain point becoming excessively formal with [Dyson], avoidant, distanced, as if a type of enacted superiority and distance had become necessary.

Fully aware of the declarative force of the narrative, of what it aims to do by virtue of the admissions it makes, of how it tries to rehabilitate the white (post) apartheid subject, Truscott (2012) reiterates the non-melancholic nature of the attachment. The loss of Dyson is not a cause of "the loss that never was a loss". It is, by contrast, certainly within the post-apartheid context, "a wholly appropriate and completely declarable loss one which would enable the writer of the text to become a part of the postcolonial community". The loss of Dyson "seems like a loss the writer of the text "can only hope" was a loss". Furthermore:

"[T]he overriding wish of the text seems to be that there were faux pas made, that [the author] … did actually almost call him daddy. The most horrifying thing for the writer seems to be not that he held back sincere feelings that must, surely,

have been there, but that there were none, no feelings of sincerity, that there were never 'carefree times before an awareness of race came into play', that he only ever knew him as a 'good African' … that the racist codes of the time were the only way that he knew Dyson" (Truscott, 2012).

Despite the apparently mimed melancholia of the extract, which, incidentally, might equally be understood along the lines of the promiscuous shame identified by Straker (2011) in the apartheid reminiscences of whites South Africans, one might argue that there is, nonetheless, a genuine loss evinced here. What is in question is not simply the loss of Dyson, although this autobiographical fragment is, very possibly, the vehicle through which a more serious loss is expressed. In other words, there may be an intermingling of losses here; the loss described may be of an overdetermined sort. This more debilitating loss – and here we need read the text as produced by a post-apartheid subject in a post-apartheid context – is more probably of the discursive figure of Dyson, of "apartheid's Dyson".

"Isn't it possible that it isn't Dyson who has been lost, but … the 'Dyson' who he knew only through the racist codes of the day, not in spite of these codes. The grief that cannot possibly be professed here, the truly unmournable loss, is of these codes … [It is] grief for the loss of racist codes that helped him to know who 'Dyson' was … 'Dyson' has been lost, and, with him, not an unmediated intimacy between him and a fellow man, but an 'intimacy of apartheid'" (Truscott, 2012).

This observation shifts on its axis the perspective of our entire analysis thus far. If the consciously offered story of (Dyson's) loss does both express and conceal another, more substantial loss, then that unmourned loss is very possibly that of apartheid itself, or, following Truscott's (2012) argument, that of the "apartheid symbolic" that framed everyday interactions and identifications. We have moved thus from the topic of lost "cross-racial" attachments within apartheid to the topic of the loss of apartheid's symbolic network itself. Such a change in perspective concurs with the more general argument I have been developing in respect of identification, i.e. the need to consider not only inter-subjective ties and investments (an analysis of ego-level functioning), but to look also to the symbolic factors (the discursive codes, symbolic roles, the behavioural framework grounding everyday interactions) which play a more formidable and foundational role in structuring affects and inter-subjective relations.

This draws attention to a tenet of Lacanian theory. Rather than prioritizing a

given affect or interpersonal relationship as the focal-point in the analysis of a text, look to the often overlooked "determining" role of symbolic factors which are often themselves productive of (rather than secondary to) affects. It hardly seem necessary to emphasize that the "apartheid symbolic", that is, its network of roles and reciprocal subject. Moreover, this network of relations and values provided not only a strong sense of ontological security, but a readily available social script, i.e. frame of intelligibility, for its white adherents. It is no wonder then that Steyn's (2001) study of post-apartheid whiteness emphasizes the subjective experience of dispossession and displacement particular in white Afrikaners who have felt a loss of home, autonomy, control, legitimacy and honour.

All things considered, it would be surprising if the end of apartheid was not experienced as a debilitating – and potentially melancholic – loss for white South Africans. Such a glowing period of "white narcissism" was apartheid, enabling whites *en masse* to retain the belief in themselves as extraordinary, as deserving of privilege, that it is unlikely that its demise did not occasion an acute (if not wholly conscious) experience of loss. Apartheid continually affirmed notions of white privilege and entitlement, producing, one might assume, a *jouissance* of assumed superiority. Such a *jouissance* is akin perhaps to the jubilation of the mirror-stage (mis)recognitions in which an ego identifies with an idealized image whose capacities far outstrip its own. My attempt to couch the relation of whites to apartheid as one of narcissistic love is, of course, strategic. Having stressed how apartheid's symbolic network might itself provide an object of melancholic loss, I want to emphasize also that the libidinal quality, the *jouissance* of white investment in apartheid might equally prove an object of melancholic attachment. I underscore the narcissism of this white relationship to apartheid also for another reason. Toward the end of his famous 1917 essay Freud remarks that the object of melancholic attachment will, in the final analysis, invariably be shown to bear the qualities of a narcissistic object-choice. If then the relationship that many (if not all) whites had with apartheid was tantamount to one of narcissistic love, then a central precondition of melancholic attachment would clearly have been in place by the time of apartheid's formal demise.

Apartheid unmourned

I have spent a good deal of time in this paper outlining the potential uses and limitations of thinking melancholia as a model of foreclosed "cross-racial" attachments and refused identifications. The unexpected outcome of this critical

journey is that there may be a melancholic condition apparent within such texts after all, not in view of a literal application of lost objects (lost "cross-racial" attachments) but rather in terms of certain lost ideals – far more difficult to pinpoint – of apartheid. This is not to dispute the dynamics of compensatory symbolic identification that I have described above, which are crucial in understanding how the "cross-racial" libidinal attachments are transformed into powerful forms of refused identification. It is certainly not to overturn the various critiques assembled above in respect of postcolonial rehabilitations of melancholia. In fact, it is exactly the constituent elements of Freud's model that have been omitted by such rehabilitations (hostility towards the lost object; the inability to summon the preserved object to memory) that will need to be stressed if the idea of apartheid melancholia is to emerge as a coherent notion.

This line of discussion opens up the broader topic of the unprocessed and unmourned losses of previous historical eras. It recalls thus Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich's (1975) influential analysis of post-war Germany's inability to mourn its fascist past, and the subsequent redirections of libido, the multiple types of denial that accompanied this inability. Such losses remain unspeakable for members of the post–apartheid nation, a nation whose founding definition relies precisely on the repudiation of all that apartheid signified. Apartheid is not an object over which grief can be authorized; it is a loss that should not be a loss at all, "the end of apartheid can only be a sign of progress", those who laments its loss "become "the other from the past" against which the post-apartheid nation has constituted itself" (Brock & Truscott, 2012: 8). Herein lies the dilemma undercutting the ethico-political imperative to identify in opposition to the apartheid past: it neglects the complications of the multiple symbolic and libidinal attachments – the entanglements, to use Nuttall's (2009) evocative phrase – of past and present, conscious and unconscious identifications. It is worth noting here that the difficulty of this situation, of the unprocessed losses for (the 'ungrievable' nature of) one's history, indeed, of one's own possible – even if tacit – identifications with the past, are not only those of white but also black South Africans, as Dlamini's (2009) *Native nostalgia* makes clear.

An advantage of the Mitscherlichs' (1975) approach is that they register the breadth of responses to unprocessed loss. As Lapping (2011: 26) stresses, the disavowal of Nazi identity they trace is achieved "not through the absolutist, exclusionary mechanism of … foreclosure, but through multiple cultural, political

and personalized mechanisms of denial". Their speculations about unprocessed loss in a given socio-historical location are, in other words, more varied and textured than is the case when an assumption is made, as in Butler's theorization, about a general state of cultural melancholia. This attention to the variety of historical circumstances underlying unprocessed loss is of vital importance in investigating how *differing social constituencies* within a given social mass respond to unprocessed losses. Doing so enables us to make two further critical remarks in reference to postcolonial rehabilitations of melancholia. Melancholia, firstly, as subjective condition or social state, cannot be expected to map neatly upon given political groups. Of course, one appreciates the logic of the argument that all subaltern identities are, as Crociani-Windland & Hoggett (2012) put it, marked by the shadow of a loss that cannot be grieved. The shorthand assumption here is that "subaltern communities are constituted by melancholia" (Crociani-Windland & Hoggett, 2012: 165). Setting aside for the moment the apparently erroneous supposition that has been made here we may note simply that there is, in practice, no guarantee that so broad and schematic a view would be affirmed. Such are the complexities and ambivalences of psychical life: oppressor and oppressed alike might share a mode of melancholic (or *nostalgic*) attachment to what has gone before, just as there may be significant differences in how a given social constituency responds to unprocessed loss. As in a psychoanalytic treatment, one needs attend not only to given socio-historical circumstances but the singularity of the given subject's (or subject community's) responses to such circumstances, a set of responses which never fit the answer that theory would predispose us to expect.

In concluding, I should be as clear as possible: the unprocessed losses of apartheid need not form the basis of a melancholic formation. As in the foregoing analysis of refused identifications, the underlying mechanism in question may be less that of a type of foreclosure – – as in Butler's (1997) conceptualization – than a type of neurotic response, that seeks substitutive displacements for the lost object and the sustenance of broader, lateral field of identifications. This, I would suggest, is a less radical and perhaps more likely response. Such losses may, following the argument I've developed above, form the basis of diverse compensatory symbolic identifications with a suitably evocative yet nonetheless "empty" signifier, such as "the new South Africa". That being said, we need to keep this possibility open, namely that melancholia for apartheid may well exist, just as an unconscious fidelity to its values may persist in many post-apartheid

social formations.

If melancholia can indeed be used to describe the response of white South Africans to the racist social system that benefitted them, then this usage of the concept cannot but unsettle celebratory rehabilitations of the term. The presumption of the silent ethical dignity of the melancholic, of their heroic loss, becomes extremely uncomfortable in this instance, implying as it does the possibility of an ethical fidelity to a system of massive and brutal social injustice. Such an account of fidelity to a lost and hated – and properly hateful – object certainly does trouble celebratory treatments, but it is, precisely perhaps because of this, all the more accurate for doing so. It would make apparent something routinely overlooked in many adaptations of the Freudian problematic, namely the fact that melancholic attachment is not a question of conscious – or moral – choice.

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NOTES

[i] I am aware that in using the term "cross-racial" I risk affirming both "race" and "racial differences" as natural categories. This is certainly not my intention. I have opted to retain these terms "race" and "inter-racial" so as to reflect the force and lived reality of these constructs in the (post)apartheid context. Incidentally, it is worth noting that I view "race" as more than socially constructed in the narrow sense of textual or epistemic practices, certainly so in view of the broad array of enactments, embodiments, libidinal weightings and phenomenological and unconscious values that "race" comes to assume in such contexts.

[ii] I draw here on a lengthy email exchange between the author and Ross Truscott, discussing the Apartheid Archive narrative in question.

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