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FEDERICA MARÍA GONZÁLEZ LUNA ORTIZ

The Mimetic Dimension of Desire in Postcolonial Societies

ABSTRACT: The capacity to autonomously exercise freedom and direct desire is often understood as the expression of the modern idea of the human being as a spontaneous free agent, on the basis of which one determines her fate and accordingly her future. Against such an account of a subject as the agent and owner of her own desires, I will argue based on Girard's mimetic theory of desire and Fanon's »epidermalization of inferiority« in postcolonial subjectivities that the baseline of a desiring existence is alienation. The seemingly untouchable interior realm of the subject represented by desires appears in both thinkers as a porous dimension that reveals the intricate web of relations involved in defining one's object of desire. I argue that Girard's and Fanon's account of desire are better suited to account for the situational complexity and specificity of desiring subjects and provide the hermeneutic tools to identify the power relations involved in the representations of desire. By critically approaching desire and its constitution in relation to others I argue that oppressive structures in the narratives of possible futures can be fleshed out, thus enabling alternative views of how the future may unfold.

KEYWORDS: postcolonial subjectivity, desire, mimetic desire, false situation, Girard, Fanon, Sartre

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INTRODUCTION

Desire is seen by many as an expression of the capacity to exercise freedom in an autonomous manner, i. e., that the subject possesses an impermeable subjective interiority, from which it can act unencumbered by exterior factors. In contrast to this, Girard's theory of mimetic desire and Fanon's understanding of Black subjectivities undermine the idea of an impermeable subjective interiority to reveal instead the fragility of the process of subjectivation. They argue namely that all acts of desire happen in a mimetic relation to a third party, and

so under the influence of an external factor. The mimetism developed in Girard's theory of desire and the »epidermalization of inferiority« in the case of Fanon's analysis of postcolonial subjectivity – specifically in Martinique and Algeria – challenge the optimistic viewpoint of a subject as the agent and owner of her own desires and thus of a way of life, arguing instead that the baseline of a desiring existence is alienation, i. e., through reference to another. Making use of Girard's and Fanon's theory this paper will argue that desire is a key hermeneutic tool in understanding the constitution of postcolonial subjectivities and the power structures inherent to this process. As such, it will also be argued here that the way postcolonial subjects relate to their future can be critically approached from the viewpoint of desire.

Girard develops a novel account of the genesis of desire, where the subject and object of desire are not in a direct relation to each other, but are determined by the presence of a third element, a »mediator«.

I will begin by presenting in general terms Girard's mimetic theory of desire, in which the relation between object and subject is always mediated by a third party. The mediation in desire will be further elaborated from the point of view of Sartre's account of antisemitism, where »choice« is not free – or authentic – but determined by a »false situation«. Thereupon I will further develop both mimetism and its relation to a false situation through Fanon's understanding of the »desire to be White« in postcolonial societies in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (first published in 1952). Using this framework, I wish to show that Girard's and Fanon's theory is a suitable tool to unmask the structure of desire hidden in the postcolonial subject and its relation to the future.

Based on Fanon and Girard, I will thus argue that the colonial perspective on desire often gets imposed on subaltern cultures and decides on the desirability of things based on a centralized power figure and a false situation. Nevertheless, it is crucial to remark that despite the applicability of Girard's theory of subjectivation in postcolonial societies, it also diverges from Fanon's theory in a key way. Girard's and Fanon's conclusions, as will be shown, are parallel yet opposite: while for Girard alienation appears as the result of choices, for Fanon alienation is the ground from which the Martinican makes her choices.

MIMETIC THEORY OF DESIRE

Girard develops in his book *Deceit, Desire and the Novel. Self and Other in Literary Structure* (1965) a novel account of the genesis of desire, where the subject and object of desire are not in a direct relation to each other, but are determined by the presence of a third element, a »mediator«. Girard resorts to various novels, beginning with *Don Quijote, Madame Bovary, Red and Black, The Brothers Karamasov* and others, in order to identify a common feature present in all of them, namely, the phenomenon of a »tripartite« structure of desire. I will briefly expound his interpretation of Don Quijote and the novels from Stendhal to reveal his definition of desire.

Girard argues in a first step that a direct line outstretched between the subject and object of desire falls short of what is required to understand the nature of Don Quijote's desires.

Quijote is in Girard's view not a self-sufficient, self-constituted individual, but institutes himself as a mirror of Amadis de Gaula, the knight's symbol par excellence[1]. Girard argues that Quijote's most constitutive desires and relations are defined not from a self-initiated will, but in reference to this symbol of chivalry that is Amadis de Gaula. Thus, even if there is an explicit relation between Quijote and Dulcinea, between Quijote and the giant windmills, it is the mirroring of Amadis that underlies these relations, creating not a linear, but a triangular, threefold constellation of desire. Quijote does not desire Dulcinea or defeating the windmills for themselves, but desires them in virtue of desiring to be Amadis de Gaula, of being chivalrous: »Chivalric passion defines a desire *According to Another*, opposed to a desire *according to Oneself*, that most of us pride ourselves on enjoying.«[2] Hence, Girard distinguishes a self-referential spontaneous desire from a mimetic one arising from and in accordance to Another.

In contrast to these two paradigmatic figures of desire, where the mediator is consciously and sometimes even willingly selected, Girard finds another dimension within the framework of mediation in desiring subjects in the works of Stendhal.[3] Here the mediator and the mediation's mechanism is not explicit but hidden or undetected by the subject. Girard's analysis of Stendhal's novels as well as the status quo from that period serve to bring to light the transition from the quixotean mimetic desire, where the mediator is a clear figure which functions as the third party in the triangular scheme of desire, to an »internalized« condition of mediation accomplished via a hidden mediator. As we shall see, the movement flows from an external towards an internal mediator, where, in virtue of the internalization of the third party, the mediation remains unnoticeable or in other words, the triangular structure lingers unconscious-

»Chivalric passion defines a desire *According to Another*, opposed to a desire *according to Oneself*, that most of us pride ourselves on enjoying.« (Fn. 2) Hence, Girard distinguishes a self-referential spontaneous desire from a mimetic one arising from and in accordance to Another.

1 Amadis de Gaula was one of the most famous »libros de caballeria« of the sixteenth century in Spain and then throughout Europe. The work's most famous edition was made by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo but it's origins can be traced back at least six hundred years. Cervantes' Don Quijote was prepared at the end of the sixteenth century with the aim of debunking the books of chivalry via imitation and laughter, as can be seen in the prologue of the work: »Sólo tiene que aprovacharse de la imitación en lo que fuere escribiendo, que cuanto ella fuere más perfecta, tanto mejor sería lo que escribiere. Y, pues, esta vuestra escritura no mira a más que a deshacer la autoridad y cabida que en el mundo y en el vulgo tienen los libros de caballería.« (I, Prol., 24) The relation of Amadis and Don Quijote is double: on the one hand, Cervantes himself took the novel as a model, which can be seen in the reproduction of some situations in his own novel, and on the other, Quijote himself follows Amadis consciously as his paradigmatic role model. In the same way, it may be noted, Don Quijote himself is often made to put Amadis above all other knights, when he lists them – (Cf. I, 548) (See Hobster: *Amadis de Gaula*, 25)

2 Girard: *Deceit, Desire*, 4.

3 For the sake of this paper, we will not delve into the entire examination made by Girard. What more generally serves our purposes is the movement towards internalization of the triangular structure of desire disclosed by Girard via his analysis. For more see Girard: *Deceit, Desire*, 113–139.

ly. This evolution is explained historically in the transition from pre- to post-revolutionary France. According to Girard, the pre-revolutionary concept of divine right was destroyed by the revolution, and with it so was the structure of external mediation. The King seen as a demigod figure had been operating as the mediator of mediators, the »super-mediator«, which with the fall of monarchism and the concept of divine right had lost all authority – thus, no king no external mediation:

»A *vaniteux* will desire any objects so long as he is convinced that it is already desired by another person whom he admires.«

Girard: *Fn. 10*

»The revolution destroys only one thing [...] the divine right of kings. After the restoration Louis, Charles, and Philippe ascend the throne; they cling to it and descend from it more or less precipitously; [...] The real power is elsewhere. And this false king, Louis-Philippe, places the stock exchange, making himself —the ultimate downfall — the rival of his own subjects! [...] The courtier's external mediation is replaced by a system of internal mediation in which the pseudo-king himself takes part. [...] Who is there left to imitate after the ›tyrant‹? Henceforth men shall copy each other; idolatry of one person is replaced by hatred of a hundred rivals.«[4]

According to Girard the Stendhalian idea of »vanity« embodies the rivalry that emerged during the Restoration, a rivalry which is better understood under the label of his so called internalization of the mediating mechanism: »Stendhal clearly understood that the revolution could not destroy the nobility by taking away its privileges. But the nobility could destroy itself by desiring that of which it had been deprived by the bourgeoisie, and by devoting itself to the ignoble sentiments of internal mediation. «[5] The destruction of nobility was thus not due to the fact that nobles had no more privileges, but that they detected the »arbitrariness« of possessing them and nevertheless desired them back. The self-destruction of nobility relies on the fact of acting »ignoble« inasmuch as it »prizes nobility«, in other words, the prize of nobility implies not being noble.[6] The idea behind Girard's examination of nobility during the Restoration period can more or less be explained as a crisscross of mediations between the bourgeoisie and the nobility[7], the bourgeois wants the privileges once exclusive to the nobles, while the noble wants to »prove« that she has »earned« them, borrowing somehow the morals of the bourgeois.[8]

Stendhal calls this attitude »vanity«, that is, a subject is vain inasmuch as their desire is not founded in itself, but whose source lies

4 Girard: *Deceit, Desire*, 119.

5 Girard: *Deceit, Desire*, 121.

6 »They are all ignoble, Stendhal writes somewhat strongly in his letter to Balzac, because they prize nobility [...]« Girard: *Deceit, Desire*, 122.

7 Girard calls it also »reciprocal«, »symmetrical« or »double« mediation. See Girard: *Deceit, Desire*, 123–4.

8 »In the Ancient Regime and the Revolution, for instance, we find the paradox of an aristocracy that by its opposition to the middle class begins to resemble it, and that adopts all the virtues of which the middle class is trying to rid itself. « Girard: *Deceit, Desire*, 124

outside, in the Other[9]: »A *vaniteux* will desire any objects so long as he is convinced that it is already desired by another person whom he admires.«[10] In these cases, as already stated, the third party does not play the role of a paradigm, like Amadis for Don Quijote, but more of a rival: instead of an archetype it is the enemy who mediates between the subject and the object of desire. Vanity becomes accordingly the source of desire by which something is wanted, not because the Self recognizes an intrinsic value in the desired object, but because the object is attributed an extrinsic desirability by a third party. The object of desire loses its reality gaining an illusory virtual existence, guaranteed by the power or even mere imaginary power of the mediator. That is why the rival sometimes is not perceived as a mediator from the point of view of the desiring agent. The third party can assume accordingly a double nature: it is simultaneously the source from which the subject decides on the value of the objects, and the obstacle interfering between herself and the object of desire.

The evolution from external to internal mediation reveals useful features of the triangular arrangement of desire. It reveals in the first place that the mediator can be precisely the nemesis of the desiring subject, making it even more undetectable. Further it exposes the fragility of all parties involved, which can at the same time play the active role of a mediator and that of the passive object of mediation. It also brings to light how Girard's theory goes beyond individual analysis and is applicable in a social dimension, as in the case of the French society portrayed in Stendhal's novels, whose social ballet between the classes of the salons de Paris symbolise the power relations entangled in double mediations.

Girard's theory identifies in literature a logic for desiring subjects, which undercuts the impression of a solipsistic autonomous genesis of a subjective desire. It reveals further that the meaning of the tripartite structure of desire relies precisely in the fact that the Self does not want an object per se, but in as much as it wants the object, it wants to be Another. »Imitative desire is always a desire to be Another.«[11] The mediating-instance internalized in the subject of desire, as a super ego regulating the correct desires, is, in accordance with the mimetic structure of desire, a sort of self-alienation. The subject, who desires, has the impression of being self-sufficient and autonomous precisely because she desires, whereas the desire itself is an instance of not being oneself, but of renouncing oneself to follow the master of values, i. e. the centralised power figure or the mediator: in the moment the subject expresses a desire she also denies herself. Thus, the master's power reveals its force when its norms are internalized by the subject of desire.

I will show in the following using Sartre and Fanon how this tripartite dynamic applies in postcolonial contexts, in which desires are often defined in opposition to an oppressor but at

Fanon follows Sartre's attention to situationality in attempting to understand Black subjectivities and reformulates his question from the universal »what does a man want« into the situationally specific »what does a Black man want«.

9 Girard: *Deceit, Desire*, 6.

10 Girard: *Deceit, Desire*, 7.

11 Girard: *Deceit, Desire*, 83.

the same time and in doing so also determined by said oppressor. I believe namely that the Fanonian scheme of the Black colonized desire to be White plays by the same rules, i. e., based on the self-alienation of the subject of desire.

2. FALSE SITUATION — MANICHAEAN WORLD

An invariant factor in this descriptive report is for Fanon that the Martinican, and by extension other post-colonial subjects, find themselves thrown in a »Manichaean situation«.

Fanon draws from several examples of African and especially Martinique's literature as well as from his psychiatric praxis in Algeria to argue that »the desire to be White«, i. e., to be like the Other, like the oppressive power figure, plays a major role in structuring Black desire itself. As N. C. Gibson notes, Fanon's thesis is developed based on the topic of »alienation«, derived from Sartre's account of the Anti-semite and »the Jew [sic!]«.[12, 13] Alienation and over-determination from without is the common feature between Jewish people and the colonized: »the Jew«, argues Sartre,»has a personality like the rest of us, and on top of that he is Jewish. It amounts to a doubling of the fundamental relation with the Other«[14] One could object, that everybody, regardless of being Jewish, Black or Native American, is at some degree determined from without and thus alienated to some extent. This is of course true. In fact, it constitutes, according to Sartre, the human condition. What is then the precise meaning of the over-determination and alienation assigned to the marginalized and discriminated? The Sartrian answer is complex, yet helpful in order to understand the colonized subjectivity in Fanon's terms.

The human condition is, for Sartre, the fact that humans are not just bearers of liberties and rights, are not just equal in universal categories, but also simultaneously unequal in respect to their situation.[15] By referring to the synthesis between humans and their situation, Sartre aims to undermine what he refers to as the core of the democratic appeal to the universality of humanity, whereby the recourse

12 Gibson: *The postcolonial imagination*. See Chapter: »The Jew and Black Consciousness«.

13 »Certain pages of Anti-Semite and Jew are the finest that I have ever read. The finest, because the problem discusses in them grips us in our guts.« After this passage, Fanon quotes in a Footnote following a passage from Sartre (FN 45): »I am thinking particularly of this passage: ›Such then is this haunted man, condemned to make his choice of himself on the basis of false problems and in a false situation, deprived of the metaphysical sense by the hostility of the society that surrounds him, drive to a rationalism of despair. His life is nothing but a long flight from others and from himself. [...] It is we who constrain him to choose to be a Jew whether through flight from himself or through self-assertion; it is we who force him into the dilemma of Jewish authenticity or inauthenticity« Fanon: *BSWM*, 181.

14 Sartre: *Anti-semite*, 56.

15 »For us, man is defined first of all as a being «in a situation.« That means that he forms a synthetic whole with his situation — biological, economic, political, cultural, etc. He cannot be distinguished from his situation, for it forms him and decides his possibilities; but inversely, it is he who gives it meaning by making his choices within it and by it. To be in a situation, as we see it, is to choose oneself in a situation« Sartre: *Anti-semite*, 42.

to a neutral free human being disguises the »Jewish question«, as if it was not particularly Jewish, in the same token for example as the movement of »Black lives matter« cannot be reduced to a question of humankind as a universal decontextualized matter.[16] Sartre does not disagree with the democratic slogan but argues that it remains ineffective vis-à-vis the answer and the question of the particularity of Jewish people:[17] »I can derive nothing more from these excessively general data. If I wish to know who the Jew is, I must first inquire into the situation surrounding him, since he is a being in a situation.«[18]

Fanon follows Sartre's attention to situationality in attempting to understand Black subjectivities and reformulates his question from the universal »what does a man want« into the situationally specific »what does a Black man want«. His Black Skin, White Masks is precisely a descriptive report of the situation of the ex-colonized or post-colonized from the point of view of desire. An invariant factor in this descriptive report is for Fanon – once again following Sartre – that the Martinican, and by extension other post-colonial subjects, find themselves thrown in a »Manichaean situation«[19], i. e., a situation where an absolute evil is postulated that acts as a scape goat for the systemic injustices inherent to society. Following this logic, for Sartre, »The anti-Semite is afraid of discovering that the world is ill-contrived, for then it would be necessary for him to invent and modify, with the result that man would be found to be the master of his own destinies, burdened with

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16 Such situationally centred accounts may seem similar to what is called »Afro-pessimism« (See Patrice, Selamawit and Wilderson: *Afro-pessimism*, online): »Afro-pessimism is a lens of interpretation that accounts for civil society's dependence on antiblack violence – a regime of violence that positions black people as internal enemies of civil society, and cannot be analogized with the regimes of violence that disciplines the Marxist subaltern, the postcolonial subaltern, the colored but nonblack Western immigrant, the nonblack queer, or the nonblack woman.« Following Olaloku-Teriba however I argue that Fanon's existentialist analysis should not be equated with Afro-pessimism: while Afro-pessimism addresses »Blackness« as an absolute a priori category, Fanon sees it is as a historical contingency or in the words of O. Teriba as »a technology of imperialism«. Thus, by failing to recognise the historicity of Blackness, Afro-pessimism is critiqued to lead to two undesirable conclusions: the flattening of Blackness and the impossibility of a solidarity between the so called Black struggle and other minorities. See Sanchez: *Against Afro-pessimism*, online; Dawson: *Against Afropessimism*, online; Brown and Ford: *The problem*, online; Olaloku-Teriba: *Anti-blackness*.

17 Sartre: *Anti-semite*, 43: »I agree therefore with the democrat that the Jew is a man like other men, but this tells me nothing in particular – except that he is free, that be is at the same time in bondage, that be is born, enjoys life, suffers, and dies, that he loves and hates, just as do all men. I can derive nothing more from these excessively general data. If I wish to know who the Jew is, I must first inquire into the situation surrounding him, since he is a being in a situation. I give warning that I shall limit my description to the Jews in France, for it is the problem of the French Jew that is our problem.«

18 Sartre: *Anti-semite*.

19 See Sartre: *Anti-semite*, 53; Fanon: *BSWM*, 44.

an agonizing and infinite responsibility. Thus, he localizes all the evil of the universe in the Jew. [...] Anti-Semitism is thus seen to be at the bottom of a form of Manichaeism. It explains the course of the world by the struggle of the principle of Good with the principle of Evil.«[20]

Similarly, for Fanon, Black subjectivities are situated within the same sort of Manichaean discourse: »How then can the Black [sic!] recognize the possibility of existence? How then can the Black escape this circle, this ›genuinely Manichaean concept of the world‹ where White and Black represent two poles of a world in perpetual conflict?«[21]

Blackness and Jewishness are thus »over-determined« within a Manichaean framework: their being as such is evaluated in advance.

The topology of being Jewish or Black in colonized and post-colonized societies presents itself as a »false situation«, a culturally constructed hierarchical and Manichaean worldview, where they happen to be at the bottom. The falsehood of their situation can be understood as a sui generis naturalistic fallacy: the norm is taken from the fact. To be black is to be eo ipso inferior in a Manichaean concept of the world.[22] In other words, it is a »naturalization of a group's [cultural] subordination«.[23] In contrast to Jewish individuals, a Black person is deemed inferior »externally«, based on skin color. Fanon calls this »effect« via an incisive metonym, i. e., the »epidermalization of his inferiority«.[24] Blackness and Jewishness are thus »over-determined« within a Manichaean framework: their being as such is evaluated in advance, as if being given a grade without even taking the exam. This represents the over-determination which is not the human-condition of every human, but of those, whose being is condemned by default. Fanon brings up a very practical example:

»I meet a Russian or a German who speaks French badly. With gestures I try to give him the information that he requests, but at the same time I can hardly forget that he has a language of his own, a country, and that perhaps he is a lawyer or an engineer there. In any case, he is foreign to my group, and his standards must be different. When it comes to the case of the Negro [sic!], nothing of the kind. He has no culture, no civilization, no ›long historical past‹ This may be the reason for the striving of contemporary negroes: to prove the existence of a Black civilization to the White world at all costs«[25]

Mistakes or ignorance are indeed universal, yet there is not a universal standard of evaluating it. In a Manichaean situation as those described by Fanon or Sartre, the ignorance of a »Black man« is absolute in contrast to the

20 Sartre: *Anti-semite*, 28–29.

21 Fanon: *BSWM*, 44.

22 See: »Moreover, traditional efforts to justify racist and sexist institutions have often relied on viewing women and people of color as inferior by nature. There is an unmistakable pattern of projecting onto subordinated groups, as their «nature» or as «natural,» features that are instead (if manifested at all) the result of social forces.« Haslanger: *Resisting Reality*, 5

23 Haslanger: *Resisting Reality*, 6.

24 Fanon, *BSWM*, 13.

25 Fanon, *BSWM*, 34.

»White man's« ignorance, who has, besides a »poor French«, a history and a culture which pardons his mistakes in advance. Fanon is highlighting here that what was called above the »naturalization of a [culturally constructed] subordination« can be reframed as the »epidermalization of inferiority« in the case of Black communities, as the naturalization phenomenalizes itself externally, as skin-color, but also gets internalized by the marginalized group as a constitutive element of their worldview. By this move the worldview of Black persons, and more importantly »a group's self-understanding«[26], is also affected, as the individual comes to perceive her own mistakes as mortal sins, as a daunting indication that the White person might have been right after all. Over-determination is hence the result of a latent relation of dominance and subordination, which naturalizes the position of each one, resulting in the interiorization or »epidermalization« of this normativity. But how does all this relate to desire, and more importantly, to the constitution of futurities?

3. DESIRE — FALSE SITUATION

According to Sartre, the fact of being a human being in an unsurmountable symbiosis with a particular situation puts humans in the obligation of »choosing« in one way or the other. Being-in-a-situation means therefore, to be forced to »choose«, and thus to exist as a human is equivalent to be a choosing-desiring subject. Identity is not a given fact, but the result of choosing who you are. The particularity of the situation, nevertheless, can make this decision tougher for some than for others. The situation plays a determining role regarding the alternatives within which one can choose, and therefore, if the situation from which one makes her choices is unjust, the alternatives are biased in advance. In other words, the desire itself is colonized. In the same token, I believe therefore that inasmuch as desire plays a mayor role in shaping the subjectivity of a postcolonial collective group, the relatively new affect-theory can be an alternative way to approach this topic.[27] However, while affect theory's common usage in critical-decolonial setting focuses on the extent to which it is possible to »translate« affects in an intercultural framework,[28] I am rather trying to depict the way the very same affect, in this case desire, is »felt« differently depending on the historical background. The background for Fanon is namely the internalization of inferiorty of the Black community, their being overdetermined and thus how desire operates regarding the situational birth of this affect.

Against the background of the internalization of a Manichaean normativity, the colonized for Fanon, as »the Jew« for Sartre, are already in a »mediated situation«, where their choices are not spontaneously born, but can be seen as a »dissimulation of free choice«. What

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26 See Haslanger: *Resisting Reality*, 6.

27 See for example Terada: *Feeling in Theory*.

28 See for instance Sneja Gunew, *Decolonialising, online and Gunew: Postcolonial Affect*.

counts as valuable is mediated by the dominant group, which in advance has over-determined Black persons as inferior. The third-party in Girard's sense is represented here by the internalization of inferiority, which organizes the value of all things. Being-White is therefore historically perceived as the establisher of values, given their privileged position of choice, and thus, Whiteness – which is per se a neutral feature— acquires the aspect of a valuable object, i. e., Whiteness is perceived as having a value in itself. The value of Being-White becomes, following this logic, the object of desire for the post-colonized subject.[29]

This is not to say that the oppressed is at fault for wanting what the oppressor prescribes. As Girard shows in the case of the French Restoration, desire may form in an unaware opposition to the oppressor. However, Fanon's account of post-colonial desires refines Girard's position precisely because it is focused on the situational specificity of the desiring agent. While Girard aims to show how an agent desires universally in a mediated way starting from the choices one makes, Fanon shows that the mediation of desire is pre-determined based on the situation in which the desire of the individual is manifested.

While Girard aims to show how an agent desires universally in a mediated way starting from the choices one makes, Fanon shows that the mediation of desire is pre-determined based on the situation in which the desire of the individual is manifested.

I believe it is already clear that the particular situation of the post-colonies is a false situation, and as such, it seems impossible to »choose oneself«, when one's Manichaean situation seems poised to undermine any attempt at a free choice via systemic biases formed in advance. Instead, as Fanon insists, the common feature of his patients in Algeria, as well as the diverse figures of the novels he analyses, like Mayotte Capecia and Jean Veneuse[30] is that, by default, they »do not choose themselves«. On the contrary they seem to choose to be White at any cost. The analysis of Fanon goes further than an individual analysis, in which desire is considered from an individual perspective, it tries to be a descriptive narrative of the »collective formation of desire«[31], without losing sight of the situational specificity of such formation. After recalling the

29 The concept of »Self-Colonization« may sound suitable to adress the interiorization of foreign values taken from colonising societies, inasmuch as it covers not just cultures which were actually invaded or conquered, but also cultures which were peripherical to these. For this reason it could expand in order to understand not just those perpherical cultures, but similarly the permanence of the colonization in the guise of the formation of the »social imagination« of an ex-colony. It also shows the paradox depicted by Girard of the mediator as being simoultanously the model and the rival, in the sense that the »self-colonized« depend on the recognition of the european center for their own identity. Nevertheless, »self colonization« as a metaphor may also be seen critically, because the »self« seems to »blame« the colonized – even if not violently invaded – themselves for their »own colonization«. Thus I believe the sartrian concept of »false situation« is helpful to put things in another perspective, in the sense that it serves as the background, which allows the possible emergence of the so called »Self-colonization«. See Kiossev: Self-colonizing, online.

30 Veneuse: *Un homme*.

31 Guattari criticizes precisely an individualistic approach of psychoanalysis and argues in favor of a micropolitical point of view that enables to explore desire in the social field. Guattari: *Lines of Flight*.

dream of a patient, a Black man who dreamt he became White, Fanon »leaves his psychoanalytic office« facing the fact that the inferiority pervading the dreamer is not a problem of that specific man, but of Black communities as a collective: »If he is overwhelmed to such a degree by the wish to be White, it is because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex.«[32] It is important to mention, that Fanon is not trying to de-individuate his patients and make them just an instance of a stereotype. Fanon is talking about the desires of the Antillean of the second half of the last century. To affirm that his analysis is not about a specific individual, does not amount to the idea that a Black person does not have individuality, but that the desires to be White is not a spontaneous wish which happens to random people, but emerges from a systemic false situation with broad societal effects.

»What does a Black man want?« constitutes, against this backdrop, a complex question, because the object of his wanting is not just the object of a »simple desire« but pervaded by the complexity of being the desire of a »Black man«. And on the other hand, the »Black man« is not just an individual subject, but also represents a collective group. The desire itself is already »condemned« and thus its objects and their respective values are inscribed in this dynamic. The object does not individuate the desire, does not make it into this particular kind of desire, because it is not chosen »by itself«, it is not a choice »based solely in the examination of facts«,[33] but by the pre-conceptions latent in Black subjects' desire. The desire is itself over-determined.[34] Understood as such, the mimetic structure of desire cuts across Fanon's analysis.

There is nevertheless a crucial difference regarding the explanation of the tripartite structure of desire, one which once again may reflect the situational conditioning of agents

Whereas Girard's understanding of mimetic theory derives from the thesis that »desire in accordance to the Other is always the desire to be the Other«, I believe Fanon argues the other way around, namely: »The desire to be the Other precedes the desire in accordance to the Other«.

32 Fanon, BSWM, 100. The context of the quotation is how Fanon expresses the relation of the individual to the social group: »What emerges then is the need for combined action on the individual and on the group. As a psychoanalyst, I should help my patient to become conscious of his unconscious and abandon his attempts at a hallucinatory whitening, but also to act in the direction of a change in the social structure.« See also: »To speak of society's dreams as one speaks of the dreams of the individual, to discuss collective will to power as one discusses individual sexual drive, is to reverse the natural order of things once more, because on the contrary, it is the economic and social conditions of class conflict that explain and determine the real conditions in which individual sexuality expresses itself, and because the content of a human being's dreams depends also, in the last analysis on the general conditions of the culture in which he lives,[...]« Fanon: *BSWM*, 106.

33 As Sartre argues of Jewish people: »This scrupulousness shows sufficiently the peculiar quality of their deliberations: Jewish factor intervenes on every occasion and is impossible for them to make a decision based merely on the pure and simple examination of the facts.« Sartre: *Anti-Semite*, 69.

34 It is mostly regarding this condemned dimension of desire where Sartre's influence on Fanon can be underscored. Fanon remembers him vividly by affirming that »certain pages of Anti-Semite and Jew are the finest that I have ever read.« Fanon, *BSWM*, 181.

in their desiring existence. Whereas Girard's understanding of mimetic theory derives from the thesis that »desire in accordance to the Other is always the desire to be the Other«, I believe Fanon argues the other way around, namely: »The desire to be the Other precedes the desire in accordance to the Other«. In plain words: Girard derives the subject's self-negation from their particular choice of objects, while Fanon draws the inauthenticity of the particular choices from the subject's alienation. The explanans and the explanandum are related conversely in each of them. This inverse explanation of the tripartite structure of desire exercised by Fanon, where »the desire to be Other« reveals itself as preceding particular choices, may be seen as the impact of his object of analysis, namely postcolonial subjectivities.

There are good and bad desires, but there are also right and false situations.

4. DESIRE, SITUATIONS AND FUTURES

I argue that Fanon's specific way of addressing the constitution of object-oriented desire from the desire to be another reveals the colonialization of desire itself, which is especially relevant for understanding how colonialism infiltrates the very process of representing one's self and one's future becoming. The desire to be Another implies namely the desire to adopt the values, the purposes, and the possibilities of Another. In this process of internalizing the desire for the identity of the Other, the objects of desire of the Other are also internalized. Amongst the objects of desire of any given subject is what one wants to become and what one wants their world to become. Accordingly, internalizing the desire to be Other implies the internalization of the desire of the Other's future, of the Other's conception of wellbeing and happiness. By relating to the future and its possible becomings via the desire to be Another, and not just any Other but the oppressive Other, the oppressed desires the development of their own future according to the representations of the oppressor. These representations have been extensively described as the advancement of individual well-being via technological and economic progress, often at the expense of marginalized communities or individuals.[35] By representing one's future and as such the possibility of changing one's situation via the desire to be Another, the subaltern finds themselves in the situation of repeating the very logic that leads to their oppression. This paradoxical process of wanting what the oppressor wants under the false hope of liberation can be seen in the rapid propagation of narratives that promote self-development and self-affirmation – phenomena indicative of progress societies – as tools of improving one's well-being.[36] Such narratives impose however a type of desire that emerged in the situational framework of Western cultures and that is often incompatible and impossible in the situational web of marginalized communities. As such, the desire to be Another often leads to the desire structured based on a false situation, one that

35 See Sandru: *Decentralized Wellbeing*.

36 See Chul Han: *The Burnout Society*.

unfortunately burdens the oppressed with the responsibility to change oppressive power relations using the tools that the oppressors impose on them.

There are good and bad desires, but there are also right and false situations.

CONCLUSION

I have argued in this paper that representing possible futures and as such the possibility of change is heavily dependent on the structures via which one desires. With the aid of Girard and Fanon I have shown that desire is not an autonomous, self-sufficient process, but has a tripartite structure, being constituted in relation to another. Based on Fanon's analysis of postcolonial cases of desire in particular I have shown that the objects of desire of the subaltern subject are constituted based on their desire to be Another. This desire to be Another implies internalizing the desire to have the future of the Other and as such to represent possible futures with the conceptual frameworks of the Other – which in the case of Fanon's analysis is the oppressive Other. Following Fanon's usage of Sartre's existential philosophy, I have further argued that by doing so the subaltern finds themselves in the position of wanting what the oppressor imposes on them without having the means to achieve those objects of desire. As such, the subaltern is inscribed in a false situation, in which the freedom to desire is understood as illusory. To understand such dynamics of desire and bring them to awareness, means to tackle the false situations in which marginalized communities find themselves forced into and by doing so to make room for alternative representations of desire and implicitly of change and the future.

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