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## Unthinking Mastery

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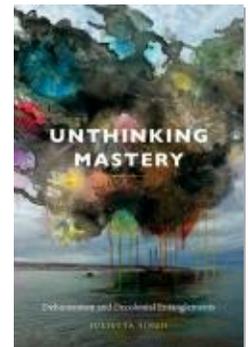
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## CHAPTER I

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# Decolonizing Mastery

Love can fight; often, it is obliged to.

—MOHANDAS K. GANDHI (1976)

I am a master and I am advised to adopt the humility of the cripple.

—FRANTZ FANON, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967)

At a quick historical glance, it would be easy to cast two of the twentieth century's most radical anticolonial thinkers—Mohandas K. Gandhi and Frantz Fanon—as politically antithetical. While indeed there is much to distinguish their thinking, postcolonial theorists have pointed to the foundational role that both thinkers have played in the emergence of postcolonial theory as a mode of critical inquiry. Leela Gandhi, for instance, has argued that Gandhi and Fanon are “united in their proposal of a radical style of total resistance to the totalising political and cultural offensive of the colonial civilizing mission” (1998, 19). She follows Gyan Prakash, who positions Gandhian and Fanonian thought as “theoretical events” that situate their work squarely within the emergence of postcolonial theory (1995, 5). Against the common historicization of postcolonial theory's emergence in the 1980s when it swept the academic scene, these scholars enable us to see postcolonial theory's longer critical history. Returning to Gandhi and Fanon as early iterations of postcolonial theory, then, is vital to the task of revisiting the postcolonial project today in the efforts to reinvigorate and to mobilize it toward new world dynamics.

In this chapter, I dwell on the works of these two central figures of twentieth-century decolonization in order to query their mappings of thoroughly decolonized subjectivities. For both Gandhi and Fanon, decolonization hinged on the necessity of a fundamental reconstitution of the self in the shaping of a postcolonial world. And yet, to achieve this end,

the subjection of other bodies appeared almost necessary to anticolonial self-recovery. I trace the intertwined and overlapping circuits of love and violence across Gandhi and Fanon and attend to forms of anticolonial embodiment that each thinker advanced. In particular, I am interested in how two such distinct thinkers reveal within their accounts of decolonization seemingly inescapable sacrificial frames, ones in which particular bodies come repeatedly under masterful subjection in the narrative accounts of psychic, bodily, and socio-structural liberation. While they aimed in utopic gestures toward masterful practices that could lead to a liberation of the “whole,” I argue, Gandhi and Fanon could not adequately account for the *remainders* of mastery—for those figures of abjection that were reproduced through the liberatory horizons of anticolonial discourse.

My critique of Gandhi and Fanon is born from the haunting knowledge that my own thinking is, like theirs, always producing remainders I cannot yet identify. To look back at Gandhi and Fanon critically is in effect to reflect on how those of us positioned on the intellectual left are also (and often despite ourselves) creating outsides to our own desiring inclusivities. Far from disciplining anticolonial politics and current critical thinking, I want to mobilize their messiness. Perhaps embedded within the knotty contradictions of decolonizing discourse lies the very possibility of unmasterful styles of being. Attending to the remainders that could not be enfolded into the unifying efforts of Gandhian and Fanonian politics is thus a way of bringing history forward to meet our own political projects. Sifting through the mess of utopian anticolonial politics is an act of becoming more sensitive to those remainders we continue to produce in the present moment. José Esteban Muñoz describes this as a melancholic politics that can become “a mechanism that helps us (re)construct identity and take our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their names—and in our names” (1999, 74). My critique of these monumental figures of decolonization is thus based not on an ungenerous desire to expose the contradictions of those to whom I am so undeniably indebted but to bring Gandhi and Fanon with me into the present. Doing so, I aim to listen to the haunting legacies and inspirational force that continue to resonate through them in the service of those who have been forced out of ethico-political movements, and those we might yet come to embrace.

Returning to Gandhi and Fanon toward a revitalized thinking of post-colonial theory, we can begin to see how anticolonial solidarities are forged

by way of mastery even while particular forms of colonial mastery are rebuked. Critically, we can also identify how the pursuit of mastery produces remnants of the social body that come to be employed by and excised from the rhetoric of a decolonizing body politic. Within Gandhian and Fanonian narrative accounts of decolonization, there is a continuous way in which particular figures—colonized women, indigenous peoples, the “uncivilized” groups of the emergent nation-state, the animal, the cripple, and nature itself—must be subjected by the emergent master who is himself the embodiment of the new nation-state and who maneuvers away from colonial domination toward freedom. As a literary scholar, I emphasize here *narrative*—how Gandhi and Fanon craft their emergent politics through political discourses that tell stories of becoming psychically and corporeally decolonized. What careful attention to these narratives reveals are figures of difference that are exiled from and subjected by masterful anticolonial movements, ones that linger at the margins of its discourses as exclusions that betray the purportedly inclusive aims of anticolonial futures. Within this anticolonial discourse, I read for and toward the most vulnerable subjects of decolonization. Attending to the slips and sacrifices of “other” bodies within this discourse becomes critical to the making, shaping, and reading of our own psychic, bodily, and relational selves.

For Gandhi, “love can fight,” and it can do so both through the self-mastering body that resists external forms of violence and through the body that enacts physical violence against others in the service of less violent futures. What we see through careful attention to Gandhian ethico-politics is that these forms of “fighting” are never as separable as they appear. Acts of self-mastery can and do also entail forms of violence against other bodies. As I look to Gandhi’s work on self-mastery as the antidote to holding mastery over others, and to becoming self-governing and free from the hold of the colonial master, I attend to how his narratives of *swaraj* (self-rule), *satyagraha* (truth-force), *brahmacharya* (celibacy/abstinence), and *ahimsa* (nonviolence) often involve the subjugation of other bodies. Women, indigenous peoples, animals (both human and nonhuman), and “uncivilized” groups who do not properly conform to the struggle for Indian national unity are all figures that reveal the contingencies, remainders, and dominance of Gandhi’s masterful politics. Such bodies, I argue, become *subjects of* and *subjected to* a Gandhian ethico-politics of self-mastery. Decolonization was likewise an embodied process of self-making

for Fanon, whose psychoanalytic practice led him to advocate for collective violence against the colonial forces that restricted the (masculine) colonized body. Fanon framed himself explicitly as a “master,” one that had been “crippled” through the colonial relation. For him, decolonization was an act of reclaiming this lost, masterful humanity that had been stripped from him through the racist dehumanization of colonialism. He articulated this through the language of humanism and universal love, even while he cast his anticolonial humanist politics in tension with women, the disabled, and, more subtly, the natural world.

These admittedly crude summations of Gandhi and Fanon’s masterful anticolonialisms illustrate how tightly linked they are, despite one being lauded as a nonviolent activist and the other criticized as a thinker who promoted violent action. Both popular formulations selectively pluck from the oeuvre of their political writings, abandoning, for instance, the often perplexing necessities of violence in Gandhian thought, or the explicit calls to love and orientation toward the Other across Fanon’s writing. Following their narrative paths, I aim to consider their resonances through their mutual calls for new forms of embodiment in the process of decolonization and to attend to what such forms of masterful self-practice and embodiment shape and efface in collective struggle for liberation. In the narrative accounts of each thinker, the decolonizing body aims toward more loving relations and more peaceful forms of sociality. Both Gandhi and Fanon make clear that the domain of love is not dissociable from violence, and that violence is at stake in every act of remaking the self and is always embedded in the engagements of love toward oneself and others. Attending to the messy entanglements of love and violence in these thinkers allows us to move past the overly simplified versions of Gandhian and Fanonian politics in order both to offer more nuanced and generative accounts of their foundational contributions to anticolonial thought and postcolonial theory and to loosen some of the knots of their political thought so as to develop through and alongside them different political possibilities for the present.

### **Fanon’s Sacrificial Women**

Feminist readings have already stressed women as glaring figures of difference and subjection across anticolonial writing. Kalpana Sheshadri-Crooks, for example, refers to “the now over-familiar feminist contention

that most national liberation movements and thought tend to be masculinist in their orientation and rhetoric” (2002, 93). I will trace some of these critiques here both because they bear repeating and because they are related to the other figures of alterity that remain outside Fanon’s political purview and to which I turn later in this chapter. Feminist scholarship has aptly pointed to the crucial fact that liberation was mobilized in these discourses through practices of control over female bodies in the remaking and restaging of specifically masculine ones. Women often emerge in the discourses of liberation as self-masters par excellence, subjects that without pause remain steadfast in the face of danger. Yet they are also the weak links in the trajectories of national freedom—freedom that remains bound to new visions, performances, and embodiments of masculinity. If women are both instrumental and sacrificial in the creation of anticolonial masculinities, this does not mark a paradox but signals instead a logic of anticolonialism. Within this logic, bodies marked as feminine are abjured in the recuperation and transformation of masculine bodies in the act of liberation.

Fanon, whose anticolonial politics were shaped by and through psychoanalysis, insisted on the primacy of race in the processes of identification. In *Identification Papers*, Diana Fuss locates identification within a particularly colonial history (1995, 141). She explains that identification “is itself an imperial process, a form of violent appropriation in which the Other is deposed and assimilated into the lordly domain of Self. Through a psychological process of colonization, the imperial subject builds an Empire of the Same and installs at its center a tyrannical dictator, ‘His Majesty the Ego’” (145). As Fuss and feminist scholars after her have argued, however, the woman of color in particular disappears in Fanon’s framing of identification.<sup>1</sup> For Fuss, identification has a genealogy that is rooted in colonial history. Yet she argues that while Fanon situates race as central to identification, he “does not think beyond the presuppositions of colonial discourse to examine how colonial domination itself works partially through the social institutionalization of misogyny and homophobia” (160). In effect, Fanon *racizes* identification while he *erases* the woman of color from its purview. Fanon could write of the psychosexual lives of white women (1967e) and dwell at length on Algerian women’s heroic psychic and bodily sacrifices toward the revolution (1965), but on the psychosexuality of the woman of color, he declared outright (in an echo of Freud): “I know nothing about

her” (1967g, 180). Hegel and Fanon make funny bedfellows here: While Africa was, as I discussed in the introduction, absolutely unknowable for Hegel, he nevertheless fabricated and produced decisive readings of it that contributed to the imperial project on the continent.<sup>2</sup> Fanon produced psychoanalytic readings of Algerian women in the struggle for decolonization even while he professed that he “knows nothing” of black women, whose sexual desires and psychic constitutions appear too inconsequential and confounding to be folded into his larger narrative of decolonization.<sup>3</sup>

In “Algeria Unveiled” (1965), Fanon illustrates how the “liberation” of women’s bodies in the colonies became central to the colonial enterprise through a process of domination that Spivak would famously come to formulate as “white men . . . seeking to save brown women from brown men” (1988, 305). Fanon argues that the figure of the veiled woman became for the colonizer both the symbol of cultural savagery in the colonies and the most effective tool for controlling the colonized body politic. If the veil was the most glaring sign of the Algerian woman’s oppression, it became the unrelenting task of the colonial administration “to defend this woman, pictured as humiliated, sequestered, cloistered” and in urgent need of liberation from the barbaric Algerian man (1965, 38). She became a means by which the colonizer could gain full control over Algerian culture: “In the colonialist program, it was the woman who was given the historic mission of shaking up the Algerian man. Converting the woman, winning her over to the foreign values, wrenching her free from her status, was at the same time achieving a real power over the man and attaining a practical, effective means of destructuring Algerian culture” (39). Here we see the “civilizing mission” of colonial practice framed precisely and most effectively through the mastering of the female body. This body reflected for the colonizer a barbarous patriarchy that itself needed to be brought to full submission. Unveiling the Algerian woman would thus not only “liberate” her but would perversely bring her into a pseudomasterful role (always under the authority of the white man) by empowering her to hold a “real power” over Algerian men. By being laid bare, brought into the fold of Western femininity, she would become able to emasculate the Algerian man who had enslaved her. This emasculation would in turn make the Algerian man more easily dominated by colonial power, “destructured” by his woman into a form ripe for full submission to the “real” (white) Man. In his reading of colonial logic’s confounding contradictions, Fanon emphasizes how the

Algerian woman emerged all at once as absolute victim, weapon of imperial conquest, and gateway to conquering the Algerian man and “delivering” him into colonial submission.

While Fanon “unveils” colonial logic, he also cannot help but to affirm the Algerian woman as a threat to Algerian masculinity even as he is determined to defend her honor. His aim is to illustrate how the colonial imagination of the Algerian woman has been a radical mischaracterization. In fact, for Fanon she is selfless in relation to the revolution and, even more strikingly, she is one who best performs self-mastery: “This revolutionary activity has been carried on by the Algerian woman with exemplary constancy, self-mastery, and success. Despite the inherent, subjective difficulties and notwithstanding the sometimes violent incomprehension of a part of the family, the Algerian woman assumes all the tasks entrusted to her” (1965, 53–54). Although she is “sometimes” subjected to the “violent incomprehension” of parts of the patriarchal family unit, the Algerian woman remains undeterred by this violence and is steadfastly committed to “the tasks entrusted to her” (54). Her agency in Fanon’s narrative is here limited to a masculine revolution that decides to “entrust” her, that makes use of her body and her determination in carrying out revolutionary acts. She is an agent but not *agential*: she follows the orders of the revolution because she remains so devoutly committed to the embodied masculinity of the anticolonial men whose bodies and psyches will, unlike her own, be positively reshaped and humanized by the revolution.

In contrast to Diana Fuss, who argues that in Fanon’s thought “the colonial other remains an undifferentiated, homogenized male, and subjectivity is ultimately claimed for men alone” (1995, 160), Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks insists that “a sympathetic understanding of Fanon’s masculinist politics forces us to confront the contradictions in a simple feminist position that privileges women’s issues and well-being first (even if it is because women otherwise always come last) and in isolation from other overlapping and extenuating concerns. In the ‘suicide’ and rebirth of the ‘new man’ envisioned by Fanon perhaps lies ‘our’ salvation as (women and as) human beings” (2002, 94). For Seshadri-Crooks, Fanon’s “political masculinism” folds into a broader struggle of decolonization that gives way to inclusion, to a politics of decolonization that is dehumanizing to *all* humans. She thus historicizes Fanon by arguing that “what Fanon makes clear is that at the moment of his writing, political struggle and national sovereignty were

unimaginable without a rehabilitation of masculinity” (96). I remain compelled by Seshadri-Crooks’s commitment to the promise of more inclusive futures that can be shaped through politics that themselves hinged on particular forms of exclusion. Other accounts of Fanon’s masculine politics, however, explicitly pressure the idea that such political discourses might give way to an increasingly expansive and inclusive politics to come.<sup>4</sup> Gwen Bergner signals how Fanon’s “universal” subject is specifically male, indicating that “racial identities intersect with sexual difference” (2005, 3). She aims to examine the role of gender in *Black Skin, White Masks* in order to “broaden Fanon’s outline of black women’s subjectivity and to work toward delineating the interdependence of race and gender” (3). Feminine subjectivity is both crucial to and absent from *Black Skin, White Masks*, and this slippage becomes vital to understanding Fanon’s own account of racialized masculine subject formation (9). For Bergner, then, the parsing of race and gender in Fanon’s psychoanalytic formulation of the “universal” is imperative to mobilizing his anticolonialism, to recognizing what Fanon overlooked—namely, how colonial society “perpetuates racial inequality through structures of sexual difference” (13).

In “The Woman of Color and the White Man” (1967h), Fanon famously engages an extended, wholly unsympathetic reading of Mayotte Capécia’s autobiography, *Je suis Martiniquaise* (1948). Introducing this text as “cut-rate merchandise, a sermon in praise of corruption,” Fanon embarks on a psychoanalytic reading of black Antillean female subjectivity through a narrative account of a woman’s desire to be married to a white man (1967h, 42). In an interesting move, Fanon narrativizes Capécia’s own narrative account by beginning his discussion of her text as follows: “One day a woman named Mayotte Capécia, obeying a motivation whose elements are difficult to detect, sat down to write 202 pages—her life—in which the most ridiculous ideas proliferated at random. The enthusiastic reception that greeted this book in certain circles forces us to analyze it” (42). Fanon’s introduction to this text, which he proceeds to rail against, is cast as a story—“one day a woman . . .”—that represents a black woman’s desire to self-represent as not only absurd but incomprehensible. Like so many other gendered and sexed slippages and continuities across Fanon, here his telling of Capécia’s own story becomes a story in itself, one in which Fanon as narrator tells us that the motivations of his black, female antihero are “difficult to detect.” It is she, after all, who extends out to all women

of color, of whom Fanon “knows nothing.” (I will turn in the following chapters to the crucial importance of writing ourselves as impossibly split subjects, and to the gendered, raced, and hybrid possibilities of such writing.) Given Fanon’s own psychoanalytic frame, one in which the black male body is “universal,” Capécia’s writing is always already indecipherable to him. Within Fanon’s own narrative of decolonization, the woman of color’s narration must be proleptically dismissed.

### **Gandhian (Ef)feminism**

Instrumental and disposable. Allies and excesses. What becomes clear is that in the formation of Fanon’s own masterfully embodied emergent subjectivity—a subjectivity that for him is necessary to decolonization—other specifically gendered and sexualized figures must be eschewed in its making. Likewise, in Gandhi’s own narrative accounts and pursuits of *swaraj* (self-rule)—a state of being produced by and through practices of mastery—women play a tricky role. As Madhu Kishwar (1985) has illustrated, Gandhi was inclusive of women in the movement toward national liberation and saw them as critical constituents to producing social change. For Gandhi, accounting for women was in fact instrumental to the transformation of the body politic at large, and he was quick to see the relations between the personal (the home) and the political, especially in terms of the embodied politics of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) as a devotional practice. He persistently situated women in the home as wives and mothers even while he created social change that sought to alleviate gender oppression. As progressive as Gandhi’s inclusivity of women appeared, as Kishwar argues, he failed to understand that gender oppression was a historically grounded and social experience that could not simply be overcome through the moral dedication of women.

If the proper place of women for Gandhi was as devoted homemakers, he also selectively employed the figure of the improper woman to frame British life and its illnesses. In *Hind Swaraj*, a narrative framed as a discussion between an inquisitive, well-educated “Reader” and an “Editor” (the loosely veiled figure of Gandhi himself), the Editor argues that the British Parliament, hailed “the Mother of Parliaments,” is like a “sterile woman and a prostitute” (1997, 32). While Gandhi-as-Editor acknowledges that these are “harsh terms,” he also abides by them, affirming that the British Parlia-

ment is a “sterile woman” insofar as it “has not yet of its own accord done a single good thing” and is like a prostitute because “it is under the control of ministers who change from time to time” (32). Gandhi later declared that he stood by every word of *Hind Swaraj* with the exception of his use of the term “prostitute”—a word that offended the “fine taste” of a female English friend and that he therefore regretted using (Skaria 2007, 219).

The link here between sterility and prostitution is fascinating in its own right, not merely because it reveals a striking (but not altogether unexpected) patriarchy at work in Gandhian metaphors but because it links the biological capacity for reproduction with the social production and function of sex labor. If the corporeal is tied to the social in Gandhi’s masculinist politics, the female slides between the biological and the social, but she does so as an errant subject.

Gandhi proceeds from this unabashed evocation of the British Parliament as a failed or fallen woman to a declaration that the fundamental problem of the Parliament is that it is one “without a real master” (1997, 32). Perceived as the height of civilization, the Editor explains that Britain is in fact diseased and suffering from its commitment to the pursuit of modern civilization, a commitment that lends itself directly to colonization. Following Gandhi’s logic, the colonial master is one born from an improper, masterless nation-state, and his actions are the actions of a master who himself has not been subjected to a “proper” form of state mastery.<sup>5</sup> The development of a properly masterful governing body in Gandhian terms would thus necessitate a rescue from its thoroughly gendered insufficiencies.

Over the course of his autobiography, Gandhi’s anticolonial politics are crystalized through the transformation of his own anticolonial masculinity. Parama Roy (2010) offers a rich and persuasive account of Gandhi’s complex staging of anticolonial masculinity, particularly through the lens of the mahatma’s alimentary politics.<sup>6</sup> As a youth, Gandhi believed that India’s freedom from British colonial rule would happen through the embodied transformation of Indian subjects. According to his early logic, because large constituents of Indian subjects were vegetarian, they had bodies that were too weak to fight their carnivorous masters. The young Gandhi held firmly to the belief that meat eating was the gateway to national liberation, to literally overthrowing the British through what Roy calls “culinary masculinity” (2010, 81), and to claiming India as a self-ruled nation-state.<sup>7</sup> He would famously come to reverse this logic, believing instead that nonvio-

lent practice was vital to true liberation. This meant, as Roy aptly illustrates, that Gandhi's own body and its self-staging would become vital to his projection of an explicitly anticolonial masculinity. While Fanon's masculine colonized body was one always tensed by and against the force of colonization, and in need of release from that tension, Gandhi's own slim, scantily clad figure—one that leans toward effeminacy—would come to signal a no less embodied but very different representation of masculinity positioned against colonial force.

If Gandhi's body has become emblematic of "passive resistance" to colonial rule (a term that Gandhi himself renounced because in fact the practice of satyagraha was better translated as "love-force" or "truth-force," which was in no sense "passive"), it remains a body that recasts the "look" and register of masculinity itself.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, as Roy argues, Gandhi's own adoption of a nearly naked aesthetic aligned him with debates about respectable women's attire in public places (2010, 85–86). As both Kishwar and Roy illustrate, Gandhi was in so many respects aligned with women's issues and saw women as vital allies in his movement toward a mass mobilization of anticolonial social transformation. But within the practices of self-mastery that Gandhi saw as so vital to the production of truly liberated subjectivities, women play an odd role. Gandhi's commitment to brahmacharya—a term that translates as "celibacy" but exceeds the sexual connotations of this term—necessitated for him practices of testing his self-control. Somewhat scandalously, such tests included lying in bed beside female followers and ashram inmates to ensure that he would not become aroused by them. Joseph Alter begins an essay on celibacy and sexuality in North Indian nationalism by declaring, "It is well known that Mahatma Gandhi felt that sexuality and desire were intimately connected to social life and politics, and that self-control translated directly into power of various kinds, both public and private" (1994, 45). But if Gandhi could claim to have mastered his sexual desire, he certainly struggled across his life with its alimentary corollary, struggles that Roy reveals cannot be extricated from the female figures that in his autobiography appeared never to waver in their practices of abstinence.

Drawing on Derrida's reading of the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac,<sup>9</sup> Roy turns to the figure of Sarah as mother who is explicitly absented from the story. Thinking through the gendered valences of sacrifice in *The Gift of Death*, Derrida asks: "Does the system of this sacrificial responsibil-

ity . . . imply at its very basis an exclusion or sacrifice of woman?" (1995, 76). Roy illustrates how women were complexly situated within the sacrificial frame of Gandhian ethico-politics. In her reading, Gandhi's vegetarianism is bound to self-subjection and sacrifice in the service of refusing harm to others. I will return expressly to the figure of the animal in Gandhian thought below, but first I want to dwell on Roy's argument for how Gandhian ethics hinges on a sacrificial exclusion of women: "If the vegetarian is one who is willing to sacrifice himself rather than sacrificing the other that is the nonhuman animal, what is indeed properly his own to sacrifice? Who is it who can undertake the responsibility of sacrifice? If sacrifice is a burden it is surely also an entitlement and an assertion of one's rights over one's body and one's actions and those of others. Can a woman be a sacrificer?" (2010, 109). Here Roy asks us to consider the fascinating figure of Gandhi's wife, Kasturba, who across the autobiography repeatedly emerges as more devout and less conflicted in her unflinching religious commitment. Unlike Gandhi, who struggles relentlessly with his alimentary desires (much more so than with his sexual desires), Kasturba appears—just as Gandhi's mother did early in the autobiography—steadfast and unwavering in her religious devotion. Mothers and wives are thus the unflagging keepers of proper practice in Gandhian ethics, ones that he looks to as models for his own desired purity and as figures that often exceed his own devotional capacities.

Yet Kasturba in particular reveals what Roy calls the "gendered contours" of Gandhi's parables of alimentary crisis, parables that illustrate "the complex character of women's (non-)sacrifice" (2010, 109) as Gandhi holds the position of "vegetarian patriarch" (106). In one parable, Gandhi falls gravely ill at a moment when he has vowed to abstain from cow's milk. Kasturba, herself an abstainer, persuades her husband to drink goat's milk to restore him to health. Roy writes: "Gandhi's response to this instance of *apad dharma*, a paradoxical act that preserves life and undermines ethics at the same time, is an acknowledgement of his human frailty" (112). While Gandhi confronts his frailty, he also breaks (or compromises) the vow in order to carry on the fight for national independence. On the one hand, the political becomes a realm that makes this particular sacrifice necessary, for Gandhi must live in order to stay the course of the fight for *satyagraha*. On the other hand, Gandhi describes himself as having "succumbed" to his wife's insistence, here making clear the relation between sexual and alimentary seduction. Roy writes: "This tale stages the question . . . of what or

who is sacrificed in sacrificing oneself to an ideal of vegetarian purity. How is one to assess, for instance, the vegetarian sacrifice of the public man or mahatma in relation to the vegetarian sacrifice of the child or the woman/wife/mother?" (113). Gandhi characterizes woman as "the embodiment of sacrifice and *ahimsa*" (114). But in this narrative (as in others), Kasturba comes clearly to lack the "heroic status and purity of sacrifice" (114). Here she serves as a proper figure of the Hindu wife's dharma in sustaining the life of her husband, all the while confirming "her status as one who is not entitled to offer sacrifice in her own right. Sacrifice is . . . an entitlement, even a property right, so that the sacrificer proper is ready not just to sacrifice himself but, perhaps just as importantly, to sacrifice others" (114). Roy's reading of Gandhi's gendered embodiment and sacrifice emphasizes how within his thought women play an absolutely vital role in his self-staging and vision for political mobilization, while revealing that sacrifice is a properly masculine realm, one through which female agency is concurrently sacrificed.

### **The Potential of Self-Mastery**

Fanonian and Gandhian thought—as divergent as they appear—rely, then, on particularly gendered alliances, exclusions, and erasures in order to stage their political projects. Women emerge in the narrative accounts of these anticolonial leaders as indispensable supporters and as subjects that need to be cast off from the properly male realm of decolonization. The scholarship that has taken up the status of women in anticolonial thought paves the way toward a thinking of other less explored figures of anticolonial discourse that are similarly caught up in and refused by the masterful aims and practices of decolonization. I will turn to some such figures—the indigene, "uncivilized" groups, the animal, the cripple, and nature—to dwell on the relations between anticolonial masteries and colonial violence in the making of particularly masculine decolonized subjectivities.

As Ashis Nandy argues, in Gandhian thought "freedom is indivisible, not only in the popular sense that the oppressed of the world are one but also in the unpopular sense that the oppressor too is caught in the culture of oppression" (1983, 63). Gandhi wrote at length about how modern civilization created sick societies from which colonization was born. Throughout *Hind Swaraj*, he dwells extensively on how his path toward freedom

would liberate Indian subjects not only from colonial rule but from its reliance on the more primordial disease of modern civilization. Swaraj was thus critically also an invitation to freedom for India's English masters. The pursuit of self-rule was therefore not merely targeted toward the liberation of Indians and other global subjects living under colonial rule but was an act of utopic mobilization in which both colonizers and colonized would become liberated. The gateway to true liberation was, for Gandhi, absolute discipline over oneself, and he sought "complete independence" not merely from British rule but from any external power whose influence could lead him away from the proper path of "truth." Elaborating this notion of "truth" at the center of Gandhian thought, Partha Chatterjee writes: "To Gandhi . . . truth did not lie in history, nor did science have any privileged access to it. Truth was moral: unified, unchanging and transcendental. It was not an object of critical inquiry or philosophical speculation. It could only be found in the experience of one's life, by the unflinching practice of moral living" (1986, 97). If truth was that which one discovered for oneself through a relentless pursuit of moral living, this meant also that it could not be squared with "the dominant thematic of post-Enlightenment thought" (97). Gandhi's truth, then, resided in a politics of experimentation that could never be foreclosed, and that was thus fundamentally incompatible with dialectical reason. This formulation of truth, founded on an uncertain practice of experimentation, might offer us the most powerful method by which to exceed mastery's hold in the everyday production of the human through neocolonial politics today.<sup>10</sup>

While Gandhi's formulation of his practice remains structured by logics of (self-) mastery, his experimental practice in fact functions against mastery's definitive foreclosures. This is most apparent—perhaps paradoxically—in his attempts to explain brahmacharya, a practice of self-mastery in which one "controls his organs of sense in thought, word, and deed" (1998, 24). Gandhi took the vow of brahmacharya in his pursuit of truth, and confesses that its definition is one that he himself does not understand completely: "The meaning of this definition became somewhat clear after I had kept the observance for some time, but it is not quite clear even now, for I do not claim to be a perfect *brahmachari*, evil thoughts having been held in restraint but not eradicated. When they are eradicated, I will discover further implications of the definition" (1998, 24). Since Gandhi

himself could not claim to be a perfect *brahmachari* (one who practices brahmacharya), he refused a full definition of the term. Brahmacharya was something aspirational and radically uncertain; it could produce infinite possibilities, yet he could not foreclose its definition. As I argued in the introduction of this book, where I sketched some qualities of mastery, definitional foreclosure can itself become a practice of masterful exclusion. Gandhi's refusal to offer a definition of something he is still (and will always be) learning points toward an embodied, material practice that exceeds what conceptual thought can contain. When turned inward, mastery for Gandhi refuses to be transparent and definable, even while for him it holds out limitless possibilities. Unlike foreign mastery, which functions through a logic of domination that is concrete in its aims (even while its effects may be intangible or diffuse), brahmacharya as self-mastery aims toward the uncertainty of its own practice and the experimental quality of its aims, with a will to the experimental subjection of the *self* as opposed to the domination of others in the pursuit of truth.

### **The Violence of Swaraj**

Meditating on the wars of Europe, Gandhi questioned why one nation's cause should be considered right and another wrong, why brute force repeatedly governed instead of the pursuit of truth. The commitment to satyagraha as a governing practice refused outright this dynamic and insisted that the force involved in the pursuit of truth was a force imposed by but also toward the truth-seeker. The political pressure of the *satyagrahi* (one who practices satyagraha) in action, which was always driven by a principle of love, revealed to others their wrongdoings and urged them to correct their own actions. It also rendered powerless those in power, because for the *satyagrahi* no one external to him could make him act in ways that did not accord to his own will (1976, 16:64). The *satyagrahi* was one ready to submit himself to the punitive power of the state, willfully disobeying it when he found it to be unjust. He did penance for social injustices, and through this form of civil disobedience he could be violently penalized but never fundamentally governed by the state. The "complete independence" of the *satyagrahi* was born therefore through this unrelenting willingness to suffer for and in turn transform the disorders of society. Crucially, if the

satyagrahi found that he had been misled in his pursuit of truth, only he (and his fellow satyagrahis) would have suffered through the enactment of satyagraha (1976, 16:63).

Gandhi's popular legacy as a renowned advocate of peace becomes quickly complicated, however, through a careful reading of his work. Claude Markovitz suggests that the critical contrast between Gandhi as icon and Gandhi as "blood-and-flesh individual" is the result of "selective memory" (2004, 163–64). Such memory is crafted both by Gandhi's own practices of historical self-representation and through political discourses in South Africa, India, and beyond that have employed his legacy selectively toward mobilizations for peace.<sup>11</sup> What this selective memory relies on is a popular conception of an unfailingly nonviolent humanity, in effect forgetting the ways that Gandhi himself was at times a proponent of violence, and that his trajectory toward swaraj was replete with violent practices. He understood that violence was not only inescapable in human life but also that at times taking violent action would be the best course toward avoiding greater violence. Violence was not only necessary but highly contextual and at times ethically imperative. Roy points us to "the complexity of Gandhian nonviolence, and his awareness not only of the proximity of violence and nonviolence but also of the coimplication of the nominally nonviolent in structures of violence" (2010, 105). Violence and nonviolence for Gandhi were intimate, collaborative, and far from antithetical. Because in Gandhian philosophy love was often "obliged" to fight (1976, 16:63), Gandhi did not eschew it completely, framing life as itself dependent on requisite forms of violence. He cited, for example, the necessary act of drawing breath that required the ingestion of microorganisms, and the need for the human use of disinfectants that would kill harmful germs (1976, 31:488).

Beyond these requisite forms, he also framed violence as something that was at times ethically imperative. To kill someone who sought to do extensive harm to others, for instance, could be deemed a necessary act of violence. In this respect, violence emerged as something contingent and contextual, something that could work in the service of nonviolence. While Gandhi insisted that "non-violence is the supreme dharma" (1976, 14:299), violence was so often at stake in his own pursuit of ahimsa (nonviolence). Indeed, the practice of satyagraha was for him "India's distinctive weapon" (1976, 16:64), a vehicle that was driven by a politics of love and nonviolence but was also bound to violence through the language of weaponry. Reading

Gandhi from the vantage point of a literary scholar, one cannot ignore the implications of this metaphor, how the metaphor itself reveals something vital about Gandhian politics. Satyagraha is a weapon used against the (colonial) master, a weapon necessary to undoing the hold of the master over Indian subjects. Gandhi did not see a tension between the language of weaponry and his politics of nonviolence because for him love could not be altogether extricated from violence. In Faisal Devji's provocative reading of Gandhi and violence, he argues that Gandhi's movement in fact "had nothing to do with avoiding violence" (2012, 7). Far from shunning violence, Devji argues, Gandhi appropriated and sublimated violence "by inviting and directing it through a series of political experiments, both theoretical and practical" (8). If Gandhi in effect courted violence in order to convert it within the colonial context, he did so in ways that were often contradictory. One struggles to account for a particular logic or pattern in Gandhi's engagements with violence, which are united, Devji argues, by a set of principles but are often difficult to reconcile.

In their recent work on Gandhi in South Africa, Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed argue against the dominant narrative of Gandhi as "a great inventor of the new tactic and philosophy of nonviolent popular politics and as a pioneer of anti-colonial nationalism" (2016, 25). Rather, Desai and Vahed argue that Gandhi's political imagination remained bound by a desire for equality within empire. They read Gandhian tactics as shaped by "a conservative defence of class, race and caste privilege" (25). Given Gandhi's popular legacy, it is almost unfathomable to think that in 1906, during the Zulu rebellion against debilitating taxes in Natal, he went to war as a stretcher-bearer on behalf of empire. This war produced very few British casualties, while "three thousand five hundred Zulu were killed, seven thousand huts were burnt, and thirty thousand people were left homeless" (20).<sup>12</sup> Desai and Vahed ask us to remember Gandhi before India, a Gandhi that does not square easily with his legacy. What was at stake for Gandhi in participating actively in the violence of war? Desai and Vahed argue that Gandhian politics in South Africa remained locked within a desire for Indian recognition from Britain at the expense of other disempowered groups: "Gandhi sought to ingratiate himself with Empire and its mission during his years in South Africa. In doing so, he not only rendered African exploitation and oppression invisible, but was, on occasion, a willing part of their subjugation and racist stereotyping" (22). This picture of Gandhi

in South Africa, participating in the subjugation of non-Indian marginal communities, is one that confronts with great unease the legacies of Gandhi that dominate in popular and political discourse. If it has become almost an intellectual fashion of late to rehistoricize Gandhi and to draw out some of the most deeply unsettling aspects of his history, politics, and practice, this fashion signals a felt urgency to think critically about our legacies of nonviolence—ones that relied on the violent extermination of certain populations toward the recuperation of others. Such “inconvenient truths” (24) about Gandhi include his engagements in the war against the Zulus in South Africa when he was a mere three years away from the writing of *Hind Swaraj*, the doctrine of Indian self-rule that he would famously craft over a period of days on a return journey from England to South Africa on board the *Kildonan Castle* in 1909.<sup>13</sup> He was very close, in other words, to launching an explicit treatise on Indian independence, on the necessity of swaraj and nonviolent resistance to the British control of India as he participated in the violence against indigenous peoples in South Africa.<sup>14</sup>

Across Gandhi’s political career, there would continue to be communities, groups, and bodies whose conquest became crucial to the achievement of the mahatma’s “greater” political aims. In the section of *Hind Swaraj* titled “The Condition of India,” the Editor overturns Gandhi’s early political thinking about the strength of Indian bodies as the gateways to Indian independence. The Editor asserts of the pursuit of swaraj: “Strength lies in the absence of fear, not in the quantity of flesh and muscle we may have on our bodies. Moreover, I must remind you who desire Home Rule that, after all, the Bhils, the Pindaris, the Assamese and the Thugs are our own countrymen. To conquer them is your and my work. So long as we fear our own brethren, we are unfit to reach the goal” (1997, 45). Referencing here a host of groups perceived as “uncivilized” and thus expressly perilous to the mobilization of the nation-state, Gandhi insists that it is the job of those seeking swaraj through practices of self-restraint and self-sufficiency “to conquer them.” In the English translation of the text, the phrase is supplemented with a clarifying footnote: “‘To conquer them’: in the Gujarati text this reads ‘To win them over’” (1997, 45n71). This translation is remarkable in its discursive shift from the Gujarati sense of persuasion to the overt subjugation at work in the English translation. The fact that such a slip happens within English—the language of the colonizer—is a problematic I will return to in the next chapter. Critical here is how the valence

between “winning over”—a kind of seduction of self-rule that would entice these “uncivilized” groups—becomes expressly a conquest in which they are dominated by the “civilized” body politic who conquer in order to become independently ruled at the level of the nation-state.

Because Gandhi himself was actively involved in the translation of *Hind Swaraj*, this distinction deserves significant attention. Persuaded by English friends that he must translate the text, Gandhi states that it is not a “literal translation” but that it “is a faithful rendering of the original” even while it was written in some degree of haste (1997, 5). In his preface to the English translation, he writes, “It is not without hesitation that the translation of ‘Hind Swaraj’ is submitted to the public” (5). Of the Gujarati text, Gandhi declares that there are “many imperfections” in the original: “The English rendering, besides sharing these, must naturally exaggerate them, owing to my inability to convey the exact meaning of the original” (6). That his inability to convey exactly the meaning of his Gujarati text lends itself to natural exaggeration in translation is fascinating in itself, but here my interest lies in how this particular “exaggeration” betrays the slippery relation between persuasion and mastery across moments of Gandhian thought. To “win over” in the original Gujarati text designates some degree of agency to these marginal groups, indicating that the persuasion enacted by Gandhi’s followers is a form of pressure that is placed on the wayward subjects of the state in order to usher them into the “proper” fold. This is a pressure that works on but not against such subjects, welcoming them into the fold of the proper through an engagement that they may or may not choose to pursue. The English translation betrays this aim by issuing “conquest” as the targeted act of seekers of swaraj. Within the translation, seekers of swaraj take up both of the early modern definitions of “mastery”—seeking to “best” these marginal groups as opponents and to educate them through the more knowledgeable frame of the swaraj-seeker. To bring these marginal groups into the proper fold of an independent, self-ruled nation-state requires in the English translation their masterful domination. If we follow Gandhi’s insistence in the preface to the English translation, we might read this movement from winning over to conquest as merely one of the “natural” exaggerations that occur in the act of translation. I want to suggest that while this may well be so, the slip toward conquest reveals the ways in which the mastery turned inward in Gandhian thought cannot help but to seep outward—onto and against other bodies.

Yet another footnote contextualizing this passage informs readers that “in 1921 Gandhi apologised to the Assamese for listing them among the ‘uncivilised’ tribes of India” (44n71). In his apology, Gandhi calls his error “a grave injustice done to the great Assamese people, who are every whit as civilised as any other part of India” (44n71). He proceeds to explain that his “stupidity” in characterizing the Assamese as uncivilized was informed by his reading of an English account of the Manipur expedition by Sir John Gorst. Because Gandhi admits that he was “an indifferent reader of history,” he suggests that he retained this historical account of the Assamese as *jungli* (wild/uncivilized) as historical fact, and subsequently “committed it to writing.” This is a fascinating moment in which conquest is explicitly informed and delegated by a specifically Western history, a moment that reveals how Gandhian philosophy could not be dissociated from the colonial frame against which it positioned itself. It also illustrates how, through reading and writing practices, particular subjects become enfolded in or excluded from the realm of civility and thus subjected to masterful forms of action against them.

### **Gandhi’s Animals**

Mastery in Gandhian discourse slips between the internal and the external, between the colonizer and the colonized, between the individual body and the body politic, and, critically for Gandhian ethics, also between the human and the animal. Gandhi explained that the life of the satyagrahi is one governed by the discipline of the body and the soul (1976, 16:63). This form of discipline required both a pacification of the human’s “animal passions” and an overcoming of the “enemy within” (Gandhi [1932] 2004, 5). It was by turning away from “the imagined enemy without” and turning toward the “enemy within” that Gandhi understood the social enactment of love. Such love required an overcoming of aspects and qualities of the human that signaled for him its unenlightened status. Sexual drives, among other yearnings, would need to be unremittingly tamed for the enlightened subject to emerge. Specific aspects of oneself as an uncontrolled animal being, therefore, would have to be mastered in order to pave the way toward a decolonized society. The effect of the satyagrahi was a politics of the unmasterful persuasion of the other, a practice that embodied forms of masterful violence against the self in order to do penance for individual

and state injustices. The force of satyagraha was therefore to be found explicitly in its determined refusal to enact violence against others by aiming toward complete mastery over oneself. For Gandhi, satyagraha was fundamentally an act of love aimed toward the “so-called enemy,” to illustrate the error of the adversary’s ways. This was the critical method Gandhi employed to show the British colonizers the error of their ways, but Gandhi also did penance for the acts of Indian political leaders and fellow ashram inmates who had, to his mind, strayed from the proper path. To love one’s perceived adversaries it was essential to show them kinship and to persuade them that their ways were misleading or unjust. Violence directed at another betrayed this aim, and so the satyagrahi embodied the violence he refused in the political realm.

If other human groups become complex sites for understanding Gandhian philosophy, so too does the nonhuman world leave open questions about Gandhian ethico-politics. Gandhi’s key concepts—*swaraj*, *ahimsa*, *brahmacharya*—fundamentally implicated the animal.<sup>15</sup> Gandhi signals this repeatedly across his writings, for instance when he queried the seemingly arbitrary limits we attach to our spiritual and political imperatives. He called on Indians to query when they would know they had reached the limit of *swaraj*, urging them to consider whether treating the untouchable castes of India as “blood brothers” was enough. He asked them to consider extending this limit to include their animal brethren, positing that humans and animals share the same soul (1976, 19:518). Humans and animals were bestowed with the same life force, and true *swaraj* could not therefore be confined by a commitment to humanity. *Swaraj* properly achieved would produce a limitless openness toward all other beings—beings that were vitally linked to humans. Yet even while he insisted on the animal’s place within ethics, he repeatedly returned to the exceptional status of the human by situating it at the top of a species hierarchy. Gandhi insisted on our need to avoid a life that was “animal-like,” insipid, and improper (1993, 317). In this sense, while he advocated for a radical openness toward animals, he did so through a deeply anthropocentric and paternalistic frame that could not reconceive of human/animal relations beyond a hierarchical formulation. Humans should “serve” animals that were intimately tied to them, a service that was required because of the animal’s “lower” status.

While humans held an ethical commitment to animals, the animal aspects of human life needed paradoxically to be tamed in order to effec-

tively perform this ethical commitment. Paroma Roy points to this shifting status of the animal in Gandhian thought when she argues, “In his more mundane communications with correspondents from all over India and the globe, he was possessed by the question of the relative importance of human and animal life, arguing sometimes against an anthropocentric bias and sometimes in favor of the greater moral worth of human beings” (2010, 105). Animals were among Gandhi’s most unreconciled, inconsistent, and indeed for him haunting aspects of his ethico-politics. The specific instance of a “mercy-killing” of an injured calf at Gandhi’s Sabarmati Ashram and Gandhi’s provocative gesture of serving meat at the otherwise all-vegetarian Ashram to his carnivorous allies, Louis Fischer, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Maulana Azad, are instances of public controversies around Gandhi’s animal politics (Roy 2010, 106).<sup>16</sup> His ethico-political stance on stray dogs likewise shocked many of his readers and followers, which appeared to them to fall problematically short of ahimsa.<sup>17</sup> Often undernourished and carriers of disease, stray dogs in India were at times dangerous to human communities and had become a serious concern for the nation. To Gandhi’s mind, stray dogs were a direct reflection of the “ignorance and lethargy” of human society. If the state was to blame for failing to control the epidemic of stray dogs, so too were seemingly benevolent citizens in the wrong for perpetuating the problem by feeding them. Gandhi insisted that to feed stray dogs was a “misplaced kindness” that left intact the structural problem that produced them (1976, 28:5). True kindness, he declared, would necessitate housing and caring for the dogs in all respects. He also argued that in certain circumstances, euthanizing stray dogs was necessary to the eradication of suffering and the welfare of human communities. This position outraged many, who saw Gandhi as abandoning ahimsa outright. His was not an easy position to reconcile, but it reflected the path of ahimsa as necessitating contextual decisions that would produce ahimsa even while pursuing nonviolence.

One of Gandhi’s most revealing discourses on the limits of his spiritual capacity emerges through his failure to protect sheep, a failure on which he dwells during a recollection of a visit to the Kali temple in Calcutta. With great anticipation, Gandhi set off to see the famous temple but along the way witnessed a “stream of sheep” being led to sacrifice in the name of Kali (Gandhi 1993, 234). Gandhi stopped to converse with a *sadhu* (wandering ascetic), and both men agreed that animal sacrifice was by no

means or in any circumstance properly religious. When Gandhi questioned why the sadhu did not preach against the killing of animals, the sadhu replied: "That's not my business. Our business is to worship God" (235). Dismayed by the distinction the sadhu makes between the worship of God and responsible religious practice, he proceeded toward the temple and was horrified to witness copious amounts of animal blood: "I could not bear to stand there. I was exasperated and restless. I have never forgotten that sight" (235). Later that evening, still haunted by the sight of the sheep blood, Gandhi found himself in conversation with a Bengali friend with whom he spoke about the cruelty inherent in this form of uncritical worship. The friend attempted to convince Gandhi that the sheep felt no sensations of pain during their death, since their senses became dull by the ceremonial drumming. Gandhi refused this logic outright, insisting that if the animals could speak they would undoubtedly attest to their suffering. Although he felt adamantly that the custom should be abandoned, Gandhi stopped short of acting on this feeling because he believed that the task of preventing the practice was "beyond" him. Despite his failure to act, he felt nevertheless compelled to elaborate the responsibility that the human has toward the animal. He declared: "He who has not qualified himself for such service is unable to afford it any protection" (235). He believed that he would "die pining for this self-purification and sacrifice," and this declared inability to fight against the sanctioned violence inflicted on sheep in the name of organized religion led him to long for another more exalted being to serve the animal as he wished but failed to do.

There is perhaps no clearer sign of the contingent, contextual, and at times irreconcilable aspects of Gandhian ethics than in his desire to protect and his will to eliminate animal forms of suffering. His reputation for a politics that hinged exclusively on peace becomes complicated through attention to his writing on women, his actions in relation to indigenous peoples of South Africa (which cannot be extricated from his willingness toward war in the service of Empire), his writings and translations of the "uncivilised" groups of India, and the various moments in which violence toward animals is enfolded into his pursuit of ahimsa as a path toward truth. What Gandhi shows us is the experimental necessity of contextual action, and while we may well disagree with some of the historical decisions he made, he leaves us with the promise and necessity of confronting inescapable violence. His is a politics in which violence not only exists but

cannot be avoided. Gandhi's own confessed failings to act in purely non-violent ways, and the irreconcilability of his ethico-politics, is precisely the messiness we have to risk if we are to act differently in and toward the world. In this regard, what Gandhi saw as the limits of his spiritual capacity, and what I have identified as some of the tensions and contradictions within his thinking about how to live ethically, are essential resources that his thought continues to offer us today.

### **The Entanglements of Love and Violence**

Fanon's oeuvre likewise reveals that his popular legacy is founded on striking elisions of the critical nuances of his anticolonial writings. Fanon's reputation is largely built on readings that emphasize his advocacy of violence while disregarding the many moments in which his thinking is inflected by love, and in which he articulates his vision for an almost romantic, thoroughly deracialized and declassed future of man. Situating Fanon within a squarely humanist frame, Nigel C. Gibson reminds us that far from a simplistic desire for violence, Fanon's project was "to understand as well as to abolish the divisive and hierarchical zones that divide, fragment, and destroy human beings" (2003, 6). Gibson writes that although Fanon is popularly remembered "for his powerful descriptions of, and prescriptions for, a violent engagement with colonialism and its logic, his project and goal is to get beyond Manicheism both in its colonial form and as an anticolonial reaction" (6). Fanon was in fact explicitly geared toward new world dynamics that fundamentally relied on mutual love in the formation of emergent subjectivities. In an idealist gesture toward the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*, for example, Fanon asks: "Why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself?" (1967b, 231). It is in such moments that we see crystalized a postcolonial vision in Fanonian thought that is no longer bound by the racial politics of colonization. Like Gibson, Homi Bhabha sees in Fanon the powerful potential to begin to live with/in difference. Bhabha declares: "The time has come to return to Fanon; as always, I believe, with a question: how can the human world live its difference; how can a human being live Other-wise?" (1994, 64). While Fanon points us toward a politics of love-in-difference, difference in his thinking is chartered through the terrain of racialized mascu-

linity. He envisions a deracinated future of “man” that emerges through the rejection of alliances with other nonconforming bodies.

In Sara Ahmed’s phenomenological work, she emphasizes how bodies are oriented toward different objects in space. Such orientations teach us—often unconsciously—about who we are, leading us toward certain socially sanctioned objects and away from others in the formation of “proper” subjectivities. Engaging with Fanon, Ahmed argues that “colonialism makes the world ‘white,’ which is of course a world ‘ready’ for certain kinds of bodies, as a world that puts certain objects within their reach. Bodies remember such histories, even when we forget them” (2006, 111). The colonized body *embodies* the histories of its oppression by recognizing in material ways that it is not free in relation to the world that surrounds it. The dehumanization of the colonized subject inhabits space in particular ways that signal its own subject/object status: “The black man in becoming an object no longer acts or extends himself; instead, he is amputated and loses his body” (139). Ahmed reminds us that the orientation of the black body in Fanon is one that is “lost” in a world that disavows it through forms of material restriction, restrictions that shape and echo his psychic existence.

Taking account of Fanon’s reach toward others, and the limits of that reach under colonialism, we must also attend to how “otherness” and alliance with alterity come to matter selectively in Fanonian discourse. Renowned for its advocacy of violence, *The Wretched of the Earth* begins with the declaration that “decolonization is always a violent phenomenon” (1963, 35). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, however, Fanon specifically turns toward love as he relays the profoundly destructive bodily and psychic conditions that comprise the colonial relation. Aggression and love for Fanon were constitutive components of every consciousness, and the task was thus to navigate one’s own capacity for each: “Man is motion toward the world and toward his like. A movement of aggression, which leads to enslavement or to conquest; a movement of love, a gift of self, the ultimate stage of what by common accord is called ethical orientation. Every consciousness seems to have the capacity to demonstrate these two components, simultaneously or alternatively” (1967h, 41). The entanglements of love and violence required a careful and relentless negotiation of constitutive parts whose relation overlaps and interchanges. Real love—which intends to oppose the will toward mastery—entails the “mobilization of psychic drives”

by enabling one to become free of one's own "unconscious conflicts" (41). A love of this kind—love in its most "authentic" form—reaches between oneself and others. But to reach this authentic state of love, one has first to violently wrench away the material and psychological shackles of colonization; only having done so for oneself could this new man emerge, a man finally capable of authentic love. The violence necessary to decolonization was therefore intimately connected to, even inextricable from, the trajectories and aims of love.

While for Gandhi violence was deeply contextual, for Fanon decolonization was a specifically temporal practice. It was violence that had confirmed these "two forces" as master and slave, and it was also violence that would finally undo this dynamic. Seizing mastery over his master, the slave would insist on his recognition as man by refusing his own mastery. Violence against the master was therefore a productive act that would fundamentally transform the slave by ushering him into being as a "new type of man" (Fanon 1967f, 36). In so doing, through the act of violence he reinstated his own humanity in an act that would fundamentally alter the world (37). Fanon did not envision this temporal enactment of violence as remaining bound within a Hegelian structure of revenge and ongoing usurpation. Rather, the moment of anticolonial violence would fundamentally transform colonial subjectivity and reconstitute world relations beyond a politics of racial subjugation.

### **Sociogeny and Narrative**

In "The Fact of Blackness," Fanon's famous narrative account of colonial embodiment, other subjugated bodies surface as prospective allies but are refused alliance with the black male body readying itself for decolonization. Fanon engages literary texts throughout the chapter as he tells the story of his own corporeal experience in relation to whiteness. He includes poetic and narrative accounts of other black thinkers such as Leopold Senghor, Jacques Roumain, David Diop, and Richard Wright, emphasizing the vitality of the literary in the thinking and articulation of anticolonial revolutionary politics. As I have already illustrated in his caustic approach to Mayotte Capécia's autobiography, here too Fanon posits a theoretical account of race in deliberately narrative terms. He calls this "sociogeny," which stands "beside phylogeny and ontogeny" (1967d, 11). Sociogeny is

Fanon's term for how social fictions like race come to shape bodies and subjectivities at particular historical moments. Sylvia Wynter uses the title of *Black Skin, White Masks* to explain the function of sociogeny, referring to "Fanon's redefinition of being human as that of skins (phylogeny/ontogeny) and masks (sociogeny)" (Wynter and McKittrick 2015, 23). Wynter explains that "we can *experience ourselves as human* only through the mediation of the processes of socialization effected by the invented *tekhne* or cultural technology to which we give the name *culture*" (2001, 53). Developing Fanon's concept of sociogeny, Wynter argues that in any given historical moment the dominant conception of "Man" shapes the "subjective experience" of being human, including how we *feel* about our own humanity and the humanity of others (46). What is vital here is that "feeling" human—as an embodied, affective state—becomes central to realms such as ethics and politics, which are most often understood to be removed from affective life. Both Fanon and Wynter emphasize how the dominant conceptions of Man at any political moment are shaped and carried over through cultural narratives. Fanon's narrative emphasis shows how the political and corporeal are always in fact tied to narrative—to elaborate not only politics *as* narrative with concrete material effects but also the transformative power of narrative in resistance to dominant politics. If the white man had woven the black man "out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" (Fanon 1967c, 111), Fanon responds with a black, intertextual, anticolonial narrative that details the tangible, embodied effects of colonial politics.

Early in "The Fact of Blackness," Fanon declares that "the black man among his own in the twentieth century does not know at what moment his inferiority comes into being through the other" (1967c, 110). He proceeds to describe how he discussed at length "the black problem" with black male friends and asserted through protest "the equality of all men in the world." Being satisfied with his "intellectual understanding of these differences," Fanon suggests that his experience of race was "not really dramatic." He ends the paragraph with a sentence fragment followed by ellipses: "And then . . ." (110). At the start of the following paragraph, Fanon picks up and completes this fragment: "And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes." Initially satisfied by his intellectual engagement with racial inequality, he then confronts the gaze of the white man—"and then"—comes to understand that his psychic and bodily experience of the world exists in a dehumanized relation to the white, fully human

subject. “In the white world,” Fanon writes, “the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is a solely negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty” (110–11). It is through Fanon’s experience with the colonial gaze, then, that he becomes acutely aware that “below the corporeal schema” exists “a historico-racial schema” (111).

“The Fact of Blackness” centers on Fanon’s famous train scene, where he recounts his experience of disembodiment in relation to whiteness in the confined but peripatetic space of the locomotive. Having experienced the radical alienation of being “other” in relation to the fully human white man, Fanon writes: “On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that splattered my whole body with black blood? But I did not want this revision, this thematization. All I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help to build it together” (1967c, 112–13). Fanon’s desire toward the end of this passage to be “a man among other men” in a collectively constructed world is perhaps the best illustration of both his commitment to humanism and his utopic desire for forms of human solidarity across difference. Rather than to have the opportunity to live this utopic desire, Fanon declares: “My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly” (113). Across the rest of the chapter, Fanon details the processes and effects of masterful erasure produced by and through the colonial relation. In doing so, he turns toward other figures whose own subjection to masterful distortion he evokes but refuses to mobilize alongside black male revolutionary politics.

Recalling his own Antillean education, Fanon describes a pedagogical moment in which he is taught to consider the oppression of the Jew in relation to that of the Negro: “At first thought it may seem strange that the anti-Semite’s outlook should be related to that of the Negrophobe. It was my philosophy professor, a native of the Antilles, who recalled the fact to me one day: ‘Whenever you hear anyone abuse the Jews, pay attention, because he is talking about you.’ And I found that he was universally right—by

which I meant that I was answerable in my body and in my heart for what was done to my brother. Later I realized that he meant, quite simply, an anti-Semite is inevitably anti-Negro" (1967c, 122). The logical progression in this passage is fascinating, as Fanon moves from the "strange" association between anti-Semitism and Negrophobia, to his reading of his teacher's declaration as a universal ethics in which Fanon becomes "answerable" in his body and heart to his Jewish "brother," and finally to a concession that forms of oppression are always linked. Here Fanon summons a universal, ethical bond, both bodily and psychic (registered via the metaphor of the "heart"), that links him intimately to the Jew. Yet later in the chapter, when Fanon critiques Jean-Paul Sartre for having "destroyed black zeal" (135) and for forgetting "that the Negro suffers in his body quite differently from the white man" (138), he moves away from the alliance between the two marginalized figures. Fanon declares in a footnote that although Sartre may well be correct in his reading of "alienated consciousness," the white man remains "the master, whether real or imaginary," and therefore Sartre's attempts to apply his formulation to "a black consciousness proves fallacious" (138n24). The Jew becomes proximate to the black man but fails to be mobilized as an effective ally in decolonization because he (dis)embodies oppression differently.

Detailing the risk of "the closure of difference instead of the expansion of political possibilities" (1997, 93), Ann Pellegrini illustrates how while Fanon expresses a commitment to heterogeneity, he repeatedly "replicates a hom(m)ologics of the same." If, as we have seen, black women mark what Pellegrini calls Fanon's "extended blind spot," the figure of the Jewish man in Fanon's writing extends the horizons of this blindness. Pellegrini argues that "the ambivalence of Fanon's own identifications with Jewishness and Jewish men holds out, as it turns its back on, the spare promise of speaking across difference" (93). Reading alongside his European interlocutor Sartre in *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1995), Fanon aims to cast the "sympathetic analogies" between anti-Semitism and Negrophobia without conflating them, signaling how in the European imperialist frame the Negro is characterized as body, as sexual predator, while the Jew is figured as cerebral, dangerously prosperous, but removed from the realm of body. In thinking the Negro in relation to the Jew—both historically racialized figures that pose "opposite" dangers to white Europeans—Fanon forges an alliance through difference. But Pellegrini illustrates that he does so by ultimately "assimilating Jewish

men to the feminine” (1997, 121). The Jew becomes an almost impotent cerebral figure in relation to the overly sexualized bodily Negro, and the Jewish male body become more closely identifiable as “feminine” than as an allied masculinity in the rhetoric of decolonization. As black women disappear as entities about which Fanon “knows nothing,” functioning as constituents of the colonized body politic who become disposable in the psychodynamic frame of Fanon’s anticolonial struggle, other (racialized) masculine bodies in turn become feminized, emerging as allies only to be ushered back toward the negligible realm of the (racialized) feminine.<sup>18</sup>

The critical differences between the white man and the black man in Fanon are articulated through the language of mastery in ways that register the slave in a complex relation to masterful being. Fanon declares that “the white man wants the world; he wants it for himself alone. He finds himself predestined master of this world. He enslaves it. An acquisitive relation is established between the world and him” (1967c, 128). There is a form of passivity here in which the white man “finding” himself as “predestined master” is almost incidental—his mastery is a relational mode that has befallen him as inheritance. Fanon is, of course, expressly critical of this masterful mode in which the world—a term that implicates here other humans as much as it signals other “natural” beings and spaces—becomes the desired possession of the white man. Later, however, decrying his affective dehumanization produced by this masterful subject, Fanon states: “I feel in myself a soul as immense as the world, truly a soul as deep as the deepest rivers, my chest has the power to expand without limit. I am a master and I am advised to adopt the humility of the cripple” (140). Fanon passionately characterizes himself, like the white man, as master—but one disabled from embodying and performing himself as such. This soul, “as immense as the world” and “as deep as the deepest rivers,” ties Fanon to nature even while his unrecognized status as master would, if recognized, situate him over and against it. Fanon’s humanism makes little room for an African animism that would see natural elements as imbued with life, with subjectivities that (like the figure of the Jew) he could conceivably call his “brother.” Instead, he “feels” himself as nature, as an expansive space that is being subjected by another master whose authorized mastery he paradoxically wishes to possess. To return to Bhabha (1994), we must ask: What forms of living “Other-wise” can emerge when mastery remains the horizon of Fanon’s desired decolonization? What futures can be born

from this attachment to mastery? To grapple with Fanon's self-conception through explicitly natural imagery—his “soul” and body living as “cripple” when in fact a master is “felt” therein—is to confront a desire for decolonization in which a “new type of man” will always emerge through the rightful subjugation of otherness. While Fanon employs nature metaphorically in his formulation of colonial racism, his humanism trails away from an ecological worldview, one that holds out the possibility of angling away from the dialectic of mastery.

### Fanon's Cripple

Fanon's masterful self, “crippled” by colonial racism, is oriented in very particular ways toward and against other bodies. Beyond the prohibitions of the black male body's orientation in colonial space, the figure of the cripple also signals a disavowal that “cripples” the universal reach of Fanon's own anticolonial desire. His reliance on the cripple in “The Fact of Blackness” is among the least explored and most perplexing of his narrative disablings. Earlier in the chapter, when Fanon writes of his experience of alienation on the train, he asks: “What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? But I did not want this revision, this thematization. All I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help to build it together” (1967c, 112). Here we witness Fanon's utopian spirit, his embodied desire to be “lithe and young” and to build collectively an inclusive world of men “among other men.” Fanon explains the break of his utopian spirit via a “historico-racial schema” that produces an affective feeling of corporeal amputation, of excision, of hemorrhage. He employs the figure of the cripple—of amputation—to symbolize a racially embodied subject whose existence is one of bodily erasure, lack, and depletion. Set against the properly masterful white embodied subject, Fanon is crippled by the force and play of colonization. The cripple becomes, in effect, the *mastered* body, the one subjected to mastery, the one whose embodiment always performs and reveals externally its subjugation, the one who is, in effect, not fully man, and thus the one with whom Fanon cannot ally himself.

At the end of “The Fact of Blackness,” Fanon turns again to the cripple, pronouncing: “I am a master and I am advised to adopt the humility of the

cripple.” Citing the final scene of the 1949 psychoanalytic film *Home of the Brave*, directed by Mark Robson, Fanon writes: “The crippled war veteran of the Pacific war says to my brother, ‘Resign yourself to your color the way I got used to my stump; we’re both victims’” (1967c, 140). Fanon responds to his own citation of the film by declaring that “with all my strength I refuse to accept that amputation.” (And interestingly here, the racially unmarked body of the cripple produces an understanding for the reader that the body of the cripple is a white body.)

Fanon’s gloss on this film is not incidental, since *Home of the Brave* is among Hollywood’s inaugural engagements with race and war, and since the film revolves around the psychoanalytic treatment of a black patient, Private Peter Moss (played by James Edwards). Moss is a topography specialist in the army undergoing psychoanalysis (not coincidentally, by a Jewish analyst played by Jeff Corey) for a psychosomatic condition that has paralyzed him from the waist down in the aftermath of a secret mission on a Japanese-invaded island on the Pacific Ocean (fig. 1.1). We come to learn through flashbacks that Moss has witnessed the death of Finch, his only white friend and ally. As viewers we believe that Moss’s paralysis is the result of guilt born from Moss’s repudiation of his interracial friendship when, just before his friend is shot, Finch (despite his antiracist desires) calls Moss a “yellow-bellied nigger.” The killing of his ally at the hands of the Japanese enemy (an enemy that remains a dangerous though altogether invisible presence in the film) becomes a convenient offering at the moment that the white friend betrays his own racism. Through the doctor’s narcosynthetic treatment (injections that prompt the patient to relive his traumatic experiences), we come to believe that Moss is paralyzed by the guilt of disavowing his friend at the moment before death.

What the analyst finally reveals, however, is that Moss’s paralysis is not a result of guilt born from racism but about the guilt of feeling relief when it is his best friend and not he who is killed in war. The analyst therefore reorients the orientation specialist, curing Moss’s paralysis by pointing him toward a universal response to war that is detached from racial politics. At the end of the film, Moss is sent home with Sergeant Mingo (Frank Lovejoy). Mingo is a new amputee who has lost his right arm, having been shot on the island with Moss. Throughout the film, Mingo has been rather apathetic to the problem of racism on which the film hinges. In the final scene, however, as the two men wait to be escorted back to the United



1.1 Private Peter Moss undergoes analysis for psychosomatic paralysis. James Edwards as Moss and Jeff Corey as army psychiatrist in *Home of the Brave* (1949), directed by Mark Robson.

States, Mingo becomes a “crippled” substitute for the dead Finch. While in this final scene Mingo initially scolds Moss and insists that he “get over” the paralyzing effects of racism, the amputee quickly turns toward an offering of radical friendship: Mingo confesses that despite a confident, quick-witted demeanor, he is undone by his newly configured body, and offers to fulfill Moss and Finch’s dream of opening up a restaurant and bar together. The one-armed Mingo—newly amputated and struggling with his disability—articulates promise in his alliance with Moss, as both men recognize that they will struggle against systems of oppression that refuse their full subjectivities. Mingo offers himself up as both business partner and “one-armed bartender,” forging an economic and sociopolitical alliance with Moss that not only refuses either as “resigned” but collectively and collaboratively reenters the social world through an unlikely but newly empowered body-politic. In the final moments of the film, Moss helps to hoist Mingo’s duffle bag over his armless shoulder as they prepare to leave the war behind them. Awaiting their transportation “home,” they gaze out



1.2 Private Moss and Sergeant Mingo look together out the window and toward a collective future. James Edwards as Moss and Frank Lovejoy as Mingo in *Home of the Brave* (1949), directed by Mark Robson.

the window together—beyond the war and toward a futurity marked by new forms of collective embodiment (fig. 1.2).

Fanon thus misrepresents this final scene in *Home of the Brave* in order to conclude “The Fact of Blackness.” His peculiar glossing of the film avoids the profound political, economic, and social alliances boldly forged at the end of the film, where promise is based on the recognition that the notion of “lack” itself is socially produced. What Fanon reveals through his gloss—through the assertion that the crippled war veteran wants a shared victim status with the black man and wants him to “resign” himself to his color the way that the cripple has become accustomed to his stump—illustrates a resistance in Fanonian thought to claim the power of prospective alliances between differently “othered” subjects. Fanon’s rendering of the cripple betrays in this sense his own conception of “man” as one that is conceived not merely through a specifically masterful masculine body but through a body that is “whole” by those very standards that maintain the hierarchies Fanon’s own politics aim to renounce.

## Dehumanism against Mastery

If I am appearing at moments harsh in my readings of Fanon and Gandhi, mine is a critique born of real indebtedness and driven by the profound potentialities still embedded in their political writings. There is a beautiful moment in “The Fact of Blackness” in which Fanon pauses to consider his own character. He writes: “If I were asked for a definition of myself, I would say that I am one who waits; I investigate my surroundings, I interpret everything in terms of what I discover, I become sensitive” (1967c, 120). I am entirely taken by Fanon’s “becoming sensitive” as a self-defining quality, and I am interested in how sensitivity itself—especially within the discourses of liberation that are grounded in love and the pursuit of less violent human futures—can continue to refuse alliances with other discrepant bodies that are cast as excessive to particular political aims.

While so much of my own attention to both Gandhi and Fanon emphasizes moments in which they appear quite insensitive to their own rehearsals of mastery, my aim has been to consider carefully how even the most impassioned thinkers of liberation—thinkers driven by love and less violent human futures—continuously refused alliances with certain bodies that did not conform to the political aims of their movements. It is by returning to these figures of decolonization, and by politicizing their knotty contradictions, that we can begin to register those that are currently excised from our own political moment—those others we continue to produce in our ongoing practices of mastery and, paradoxically, through our struggles for justice.

Fanon’s “becoming sensitive” as a quality of the self is instrumental to vulnerable reading, to becoming porous to texts in ways that might reshape our subjectivities and our political aspirations. Pairing Fanon’s sensitivity with Gandhi’s always shifting experimental practices in search of truth, we can begin to see the possibility for a dehumanist praxis in which the remainders of anticolonial political thought—women, indigenous peoples, animals, the disabled, and nature writ large—become sites that can cultivate our own sensitivities to those we are currently (and often despite ourselves) producing as remainders to our purportedly inclusive politics. The decolonizing politics of our present moment might reach for sensitivities we ourselves cannot yet anticipate through experimental practices that can lead us into radically other forms of feeling and acting. Such practices

include vulnerable reading, which I take up in the last three chapters of the book as I turn toward a dehumanist ethico-politics. The decolonizing potential of dehumanism against mastery must reach beyond the historically contingent figure of the human toward other forms of living and being. Dehumanism's promise is in becoming sensitive to those human and inhuman beings that we currently conceive as proximate to us, and most urgently to those which we still imagine as radically distinct.