

Laura Chrisman

Nancy K. Ketcham Professor of English

University of Washington

### The Vanishing Body of Frantz Fanon in Paul Gilroy's Work

The recent work of Paul Gilroy—starting with *Against Race*—stands in fascinating relationship to his earlier work. How far the changes in topic and approach have been influenced by criticisms of *The Black Atlantic* is difficult to gauge. Certainly, Gilroy appears to have taken on board many of these criticisms. If, before, he minimized the significance of colonialism in his account of black subjugation, maximizing the diaspora experience of slavery instead, he now accords a significant role to the global operations of empire; if anything, slavery now becomes, arguably, the muted referent. If before Gilroy gave intellectual primacy to the voices of African-American writers (Du Bois, Richard Wright, Toni Morrison), he has now broadened his range to include Caribbean and African intellectuals (Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor). Criticised for neglecting the commodification of black expression in general and music in particular, he now addresses the global trade in black popular cultures and black bodies. Criticised for neglecting satirical humour as a cultural resource and legacy, he now incorporates analysis of humour both black and white, US and British (George Clinton of the 1970s, the British television series *The Office*, Ali G, and so on).

While his geographical and aesthetic scale has grown to global proportions, Gilroy's approach to racial culture and politics has shrunk. Formerly criticized for

inconsistently affirming the progressive, countercultural existence of a discrete racial culture while simultaneously condemning the racial formulations of others, he is now consistent in targeting the whole project of racial conceptualization itself. Accordingly aside from a very few passing allusions his work has dropped the 'black Atlantic' terminology and prefers instead the race-neutral terms and values of 'diaspora' and 'cosmopolitanism'. And with the loss of the black Atlantic unit all affirmative evaluations of contemporary black political culture have also gone, to be replaced by allegations of the narcissistic/fascistic underpinnings of black US identities; contentions of the total, objectifying appropriation of black vernacular expression by 'corporate multicultural' industries; and the championing of white, European agents of global humanitarian solidarity. Criticised in the past for his vanguardist promotions both of black diaspora and white Europe, Gilroy has evidently ceased the former, while retaining a modified version of the latter.

Many other important shifts in Gilroy's writing do not appear to arise from criticism of his earlier work. Among the most striking is the redirection of political-cultural agency. This is perhaps summed up in a change of lexicon. In *The Black Atlantic*, 'black vernacular countercultures' to modernity' form the object of study. In both *Against Race* and *After Empire* this has given way to the frequently-deployed phrase 'dissident cultures'. Agents are no longer to be seen as oppositional but as dissenting democrats; what they dissent from is not 'modernity' as such but the raciological, totalitarian regime that currently exercises global domination. Whereas previously Gilroy's black agents acted on their own (individual or collective) behalf, articulating an expressive tradition

that emerged from their legacy of racialised suffering, now his favoured agents are acting on behalf of suffering others.

The opening pages of *Against Race* mark the transition from the 'old' *Black Atlantic* language to the new, and with it, the reasons for Gilroy's abandonment of black expressive cultures as harbingers of transfigurative politics:

Historians ... have not always appreciated the significance of these sometimes-hidden, modern *countercultures* formed by long and brutal experiences of racialized subordination through slavery and colonialism and since. The minor, *dissident* traditions that have been constituted against the odds amid suffering and dispossession have been overlooked ... Nonetheless, vernacular cultures and the stubborn social movements that were built upon their strengths and tactics have left their imprint on an increasingly globalized popular culture. Originally tempered by the ghastly extremities of racial slavery, these *dissident* cultures remained strong and supple long after the formalities of emancipation, but they are now in decline and their prospects cannot be good. They are already being transformed beyond recognition by the uneven effects of globalization and planetary commerce in blackness. (*AR*, p. 13. italics added).

Gilroy's interest lies more now in championing the selfless agency of people such as the British pro-Palestinian activist Rachel Corrie, who died beneath an Israeli bulldozer:

The growing band of people who opt to bear active witness to distant suffering and even to place their lives at risk in many parts of the world as human shields thankfully represent the undoing of identity politics ... Theirs is a translocal

commitment to the practical transfiguration of democracy which is incompatible with racism and ethnic absolutism. (*AE*, pp. 88-9)

Gilroy presents such activists as a type of first-world force that aids ‘helpless’ colonized populations: ‘Where the lives of natives, prisoners and enemies are abject and vulnerable, they must be shielded by others, endowed with those more prestigious, rights-bearing bodies that can inhibit the brutal exercise of colonial governance’ (*AE*, pp. 88-9).

Gilroy’s choice of the ‘dissident’ word carries with it a range of connotations, including those of Cold War anti-Soviet agitators. That mid-century disposition registers throughout the work, which openly aligns itself with third- and first- world intellectuals of this period such as Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno and George Orwell. Indeed his recent writing can be seen as the idiosyncratic hybrid product of two historical moments with which Gilroy has strong affinities and interests: the 18<sup>th</sup>-century and the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, respective homes of the Enlightenment and anti-colonial as well as anti-fascist (and anti-Soviet) agitation. As Simon Gikandi has already astutely traced the Enlightenment characteristics of Gilroy’s thought in *Against Race*, I will refrain from further elaboration here (Gikandi 2002). What I will do, however, is explore the ways in which Gilroy draws upon anti-colonial activists of the mid-century, and in particular his presentation of the life and work of Frantz Fanon.<sup>1</sup> This is instructive as a way to further understand how Gilroy conceptualizes humanism and cosmopolitanism. It is also a useful way to explore the unique contours of Gilroy’s prose, and the ways in which his self-designated ‘wilful dislocation’ operates at the level of technique as well as argument (*AR*, p. 337). I want to suggest that Gilroy’s prose performs a kind of ‘disembodiment’

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<sup>1</sup> For an invaluable discussion of postcolonial reinterpretations of Fanon’s thought see Neil Lazarus.

(of self, of other) that is consonant with his critical stands against 'epidermalisation', against historical materialism, against nationalism, and 'against race'.

### *Writing Fanon.*

Gilroy's treatment of Fanon resembles, in some respects, his treatment of Du Bois and Richard Wright in *The Black Atlantic*, which renders them exemplars and beneficiaries of transatlantic, 'outernational' hybridity, at times against the verbal sentiments of the writers themselves. Thus, to take the case of DuBois, Gilroy construes African-American double consciousness as 'an implicit argument that the cultures of diaspora blacks can be profitably interpreted as expressions of and commentaries upon ambivalences generated by modernity' (*BA*, p. 117). DuBois' original references and analysis are directed specifically to the USA, Gilroy overrides 'the USA' with 'modernity', the national domain with the international, the material with the transcendental. Having rejected DuBois' own hermeneutic boundaries of the US nation and black American particularity, Gilroy is then at liberty to create other, preferred, correspondences and meanings. In the case of Frantz Fanon, Gilroy's overriding technique is somewhat more pronounced, his exclusions more conspicuous.

The first glimpses of Fanon in *Against Race* are those of the *Black Skin, White Masks* author, whose concerns to liberate humanity from 'race' are generated as much by concern for the injurious effect of race thinking for Jews (p. 1) and for whites (p. 15) as for blacks. This is Gilroy's portrait of Fanon the psychiatrist-as-humanist, whose analysis of race's pathological dehumanising impact on white subjects allegedly resembles that of the Martin Luther King, Jr. (p. 15). This version of Fanon is augmented by Gilroy's

subsequent references to Fanon's 'epidermalisation' analysis (chapter five of *Black Skin*), from which Gilroy concludes that the only 'ethical response' to Fanon's insights is 'to demand liberation not from white supremacy alone ... but from all racializing and raciological thought' (AR, p. 40). Fanon's original passage is expressly and exclusively about black subjectivity, the splitting of black bodies from black skin (with the latter alienating the black subject from the former). Gilroy recasts this as an insight into 'the estrangement from authentic human being in the body and being in the world that colonial social relations had wrought' (AR, p. 46). Notwithstanding Fanon's own comment, in this same chapter, that 'the Negro suffers in his body quite differently from the white man', Gilroy turns the account into one that applies equally to all those—white and black, dominator and dominated—involved in the colonial experience.

And Gilroy openly qualifies Fanon's holistic, affirmative perspective on corporeal/affective re-integration. Instead of Fanon's 'wholesome' corporeality there is, for Gilroy, 'suffering' corporeality; instead of Fanon's formulation of a 'real dialectic between body and the world' Gilroy prefers what he terms the 'less triumphal' formulation of 'our being toward death', a view that Fanon might regard as itself pathologically morbid (AR, pp. 46-7). Gilroy's ascription to black culture of a 'yearning for death' in *The Black Atlantic*, based that yearning on the particular conditions of enslavement and its legacy. In his recent work, however, this yearning has evidently become common human property, just as 'suffering' is now held to be the most salient characteristic and common denominator of humanity. To have a human body is to experience pain, for Gilroy. In contrast, for Fanon, pain results from the loss of

connection to that black body, or more specifically, from the loss of corporeal self-possession.

I am suggesting that Gilroy is perhaps too quick to equate the black skin (an externally imposed and racist conception) with the black body, in his interpretation of the *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon.<sup>2</sup> And that Gilroy's perception of the common human condition as a state of perpetual 'being in pain' or yearning for death may blunt the force of Fanon's insights into racism and its effects on black subjectivity. There are other elements in the complex textual relationship between the two thinkers. Postcolonial studies has generated factionalism wherein scholars tend to side with (and to cite) either the Fanon of *Black Skin, White Masks* or the Fanon of *The Wretched of the Earth*. Gilroy's recent work avoids this polarity, drawing upon both texts and even quoting from the less read 'Spontaneity' chapter of *Wretched*. Indeed, Gilroy engages with Fanon's still further marginalised text, *Toward the African Revolution*. The unorthodox relationship does not stop there. The broader the range of Gilroy's citations, the more striking the maverick quality of his interpretation.

For example, it is as a decorated 'anti-fascist patriot', World War Two veteran that Gilroy casts the combatant Fanon, rather than as his more conventional casting as an activist within the struggle for Algerian liberation. He is additionally characterized (variously) in *Against Race* and in *After Empire* as an anti-Marxist thinker, a proponent of cosmopolitan values, a prototype of relational rather than oppositional politics, and a non-dialectical thinker. Every one of these characterisations (aside from that of anti-fascism) is open to debate. That Fanon advocates, as Gilroy alleges, a radical universal humanism is certainly undeniable (if frequently overlooked). The invention of a global

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<sup>2</sup> Useful recent discussions of Fanon's epidermal analysis are found in Lebeau and Gordon.

humanity is indeed, as I read it, the end of his project of decolonisation. But the means to this end is nationalist, revolutionary violence, and through it, the abolition of colonizers as a class and 'species' being. Neither violence nor nationalism, significantly, has a valued presence in Gilroy's account of Fanon.

What is more, Gilroy ironically utilizes Fanonian anti-colonial language in order to denounce what he sees as the stultifying effects of the nation itself as identity and cultural centre:

Inside the nation's fortifications, culture is required to assume an artificial texture and an impossibly even consistency. The national camp puts an end to any sense of cultural development. Culture as process is arrested. Petrified and sterile, it is impoverished by the national obligation not to change but to recycle the past continually in an essentially unmodified mythic form. Tradition is reduced to simple repetition. (AR, p. 84)

Readers familiar with 'Concerning Violence' and 'On National Culture' will recognize these as precisely the characteristics, for Fanon, of *colonised* culture. All of this makes impossible the production of genuine national identity and culture.

Thus, according to Fanon,

The colonial situation calls a halt to national culture in almost every field ... By the time a century or two of exploitation has passed there comes about a veritable emaciation of the stock of national culture. It becomes a set of automatic habits, some traditions of dress and a few broken-down institutions. Little movement can be discerned in such remnants of culture; there is no real creativity and no overflowing life. The poverty of the people, national oppression and the inhibition

of culture are one and the same thing. After a century of colonial domination we find a culture which is rigid in the extreme, or rather what we find are the dregs of culture, its mineral strata. The withering away of the reality of the nation and the death-pangs of the national culture are linked to each other in mutual dependences. (*Wretched*, p. 191)

Fanon describes the antithesis as the process of decolonization in which national culture assumes the same mutability and vitality as the political struggle for nationhood itself: 'The struggle for freedom does not give back to the national culture its former value and shapes; this struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between men cannot leave intact either the form or the content of the people's culture' (*Wretched*, p. 198). In other words, Gilroy provocatively transplants Fanonian pro-nationalist sentiments into their opposite: anti-nationalist soil.

Another transplantation also occurs in *Against Race*. The Fanon of *Wretched of the Earth* belongs unconditionally with the 'camp' of the colonized; his articulation of Manicheanism makes clear that colonizer and colonized are absolute, spatialised conditions, fundamentally opposed, produced by colonialism and requiring the wholesale destruction of colonial society, polity and economy. Fanon goes into considerable detail into the mechanics of that decolonization process and the means whereby the colonized assumes collective identity and agency. As he puts it,

Violence alone, violence committed by the people, violence organized and educated by its leaders, makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them. Without that struggle, without that knowledge of the practice of action, there's nothing but a fancy-dress parade and the blare of the

trumpets. There's nothing save a minimum of readaptation, a few reforms at the top, a flag waving ... (*Wretched*, p. 118)

The process, as Fanon makes graphically clear, includes rejection of 'Western' culture and 'values':

[During decolonisation] ... when the native hears a speech about Western culture he pulls out his knife—or at least he makes sure it is within reach. The violence with which the supremacy of white values is affirmed ... mean that, in revenge, the native laughs in mockery when Western values are mentioned in front of him ... and vomit[s] them up. (*Wretched*, p. 33)

Yet Gilroy surprisingly depicts Fanon as calling for:

The institution of an anticolonial and nonracial universalism [that] ... reveals his links to the modern political traditions of the Western world ... His words articulate a reminder that between the fortified encampments of the colonizers and the quarters of the colonized there were other locations. These in-between locations represent ... opportunities for greater insight into the opposed worlds that enclosed them. There, the double-consciousness required by the everyday work of translation offered a prototype for the ethically charged role of the interpreter with which our most imaginative intellectuals have answered the challenges of postmodern society. (*AR*, pp. 70-71)

Gilroy shifts Fanon's location from within the national-liberationist 'camp' of the colonized, to the 'inbetween', where he becomes a mediator whose imagination and intellect, as well as his formation by Western political tradition, make him responsible

for interpreting each 'camp' to the other. The exercise becomes one of promoting mutual understanding rather than abolishing the material injustice that is colonialism.

It is true that Fanon is also, in *Wretched of the Earth*, a stern and prescient critic of the 'pitfalls' of nationalism. Unless, with political independence, it develops from national to social consciousness and economic transformation (socialism), Fanon warns, nationalism risks the decline to neo-colonialism. But for Fanon, the risks of what nationalism may develop into do not ever negate the necessity of directing anti-colonial liberation through the unit of the nation 'which is sacred and fundamental' (*Wretched*, p. 151). And the risk is not only, or primarily, as Gilroy would have it, the failure to transcend racial identification, but the risk of capitulating to the capitalism that has, for Fanon, itself been so central to the operations of colonial racism. In other words, the advent of a nonracial humanism, the transition from national to social consciousness, is conditional upon the creation of new *economic* relations within the postcolonial nation-state.

At times Gilroy seems to intimate that the major problem with racial-colonial structures is the way that they break up previously-established benign interaction across populations, that they disrupt cosmopolitan identities:

Fanon presents the Manichean opposition of those huge ... aggregates "black" and "white" as a catastrophe. Wherever this arrangement has been established, patterns of intermixture and cosmopolitan combination were erased. ... intercultural relations that were more complex and more fluid were replaced by this simpler, bipolar antagonism. (*AE*, p. 45)

The intersectionality that Gilroy affirms here is less historical, I suspect, than theoretical—it is difficult to determine when, in the absence of examples, these fluid relations were practiced, or where, and by how long they might have preceded political domination and economic exploitation. Certainly Fanon’s writings do not, to my knowledge, highlight a prelapsarian era of transcultural cosmopolitanism that colonialism is responsible for erasing.

But it is Gilroy’s conclusion of this Fanonian discussion that is most striking, and provocative: ‘Repudiation of those dualistic pairings—black/white, settler/native, colonizer/colonized—has become an urgent political and moral task ... it can be accomplished via a concept of *relation*’ (AE, p. 45). As we have already witnessed, Gilroy’s idealism systematically rewrites Fanon’s materialism. Where Fanon wants to eliminate colonialism, Gilroy wants to develop relationality across colonizer and colonized. Where Fanon wants to abolish unjust and unequal socio-economic structures, Gilroy wants to build bridges across oppositional identities and denounce binary patterns of thought. And Gilroy wants to render Fanon as his effective proxy in this project.

It is not Fanon alone of mid-century third-world intellectuals who is made to perform this function. Gilroy also selects the poet and first premier of Senegal, Léopold Senghor. Senghor, distinguished as he is for theorising Négritude, and leading Senegal to political independence from France, is an unusual choice for illustrating cosmopolitan values of intercultural exchange. That he was a self-proclaimed humanist is as undeniable and as overlooked as in the case of Fanon. To that extent, Gilroy’s decision to flag the humanistic dimensions of Senghor’s vision and intellectual contribution is an extremely

welcome corrective to the postcolonial critical myopia that castigates Senghor and his Négritude project as a ‘racist’, ‘essentialist’ endeavour.

But there are conditions for this rehabilitation. And they are the effective Europeanization of Senghor: Europe becomes, historically, politically, and culturally, Senghor’s matrix.<sup>3</sup> Thus *Against Race* situates Senghor’s formative experience as belonging to World War Two—not as a anti-fascist combatant so much as a prisoner of war, significantly ‘saved from a racist massacre at the moment of surrender by the intervention of a French officer’ (p. 92). To this French redemptive agency Gilroy adds German: [Senghor] describes how his re-reading—particularly of Goethe—triggered a “veritable conversion” that enabled him to live with the complex transcultural patterns of his own hybrid mentality and to see that complex commingling as something more than the loss and betrayal we are always told it must be’ (*AR*, p. 92). (The ‘we’ of the last sentence might itself be argued to perform camp thinking; I am not of the ‘we’ that is always told that admixture is treachery, and as a consequence do not belong to this camp.)

This argument is familiar to readers of *The Black Atlantic*. But Gilroy develops it further here. Whereas for Du Bois and Wright, European sojourn allegedly enables an escape from the confines and concerns of racialised being, in the case of Senghor Europe enhances ‘his understanding of Négritude itself’ (p. 92) and his appreciation of ‘the antitoxins that can be discovered and celebrated in crossing cultures’ (p. 93). It is Europe that Senghor can thank for refining his theorisation of blackness. And it is Senghor’s subjection to European fascism, more than his subjection to French colonialism in West Africa, which Gilroy appears to prioritise in his account of Senghor’s emergent politics.

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<sup>3</sup> Gikandi makes a similar critique of the Europeanisation of Alain Locke in *Against Race*.

It should be possible to develop an analysis that accords equality to fascism and colonialism as oppressive, separate if intertwined forces of the twentieth century (such as Hannah Arendt's project in *Origins of Totalitarianism*). And it should be possible to give an explanation of anti-colonial humanism that does not pronounce its kinship with 'Western political traditions' (AR, p. 70), at the expense of the colonised world, downplaying its constructive role in the creation of this humanism. (Senghor's own essay 'Négritude: a Humanism of the Twentieth Century' is an example of this more evenhanded practice.)

It is not only Eurocentrism that causes Gilroy to give greater explanatory weight to fascism, and to European culture, in the development of third world humanism. It is also his desire to valorise 'cosmopolitan' values and cultural-political agency, that are for him exemplified through their concern with (advancement of) 'others' rather than with 'self'. Fanon and Senghor are difficult candidates for such a project, however, for the simple reason that their own internationalism, and humanism, is so inextricable from their nationalism. As Fanon argues in concluding 'On National Culture':

*The building of a nation is of necessity accompanied by the discovery and encouragement of universalising values. Far from keeping aloof from other nations, therefore, it is national liberation which leads the nation to play its part on the stage of history. It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this two-fold emerging is ultimately the source of all culture. (Wretched, p. 199. Italics added)*

It is worth noting that elsewhere in *The Wretched of the Earth* neither the 'cosmopolitan' nor the 'universalism' words find favour. The opening of 'The Pitfalls of

National Consciousness' laments the emergence of neo-colonialism which '*slowly leave[s] the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge, sometimes laboriously, as a claim to nationhood*' (*Wretched*, p. 119). Lamenting the way in which 'the nation is passed over for the race', Fanon explains that 'This ... is not solely the result of the mutilation of the colonized people by the colonial regime. *It is also the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class, of its spiritual penury, and of the profoundly cosmopolitan mould that its mind is set in*' (*Wretched*, p. 119). For Fanon internationalism is one thing, cosmopolitanism quite another. Internationalism, a political culture of human liberation, develops dialectically through nationalism; cosmopolitanism expresses the parasitic ideology of a decadent bourgeoisie.

Gilroy's engagement with Fanon seems guided less by what Fanon writes than by what he can be made to represent. As an exemplary figure, his emblematic status, like that of Bob Marley, prevails over the contents of his arguments. Gilroy gives a similar treatment to Senghor, whose war experience becomes more significant than the details of his work as a theoretician. Rendered signs rather than producers of knowledge, these anti-colonialists of the mid-twentieth century can thus become allies in Gilroy's quest for planetary humanism.

However, I want to suggest that Gilroy's selective use of Fanon's texts is not random or casual: it is part of a systematic process, and politics, of de-materialisation. To dislocate aspects of Fanon's ideas from their original context, their textual body, is akin to removing the 'taint' of black corporeality itself from Fanon. 'Taint', 'tarnish' and 'purge' are recurring words in Gilroy's writing, notwithstanding his condemnation of raciological discourses of 'purity'. Thus he explains that 'The camp mentalities

constituted by appeals to ... bodies, and fantasies of absolute cultural identity ... work through appeals to the value of *national or ethnic purity*. Their biopolitical potency immediately raises questions of prophylaxis and hygiene, “as if the (social) body had to assure itself of its own identity by expelling waste matter.” (AR, p. 83).

At the same time, ironically, Gilroy’s own language favours the process of purgation from contaminants. For example, he argues that ‘revitalizing ethical sensibilities ... requires moving away from antiracism’s *tarnished* vocabulary while retaining many of the hopes to which it was tied’ (AR, p. 6), and ‘action against racial hierarchies can proceed more effectively when it has been *purged* of any lingering respect for the idea of “race” (AR, p. 13). This ‘purging’ rescues Fanon from the interpretive bodily limits of history, nation, economy, society. And it also liberates him from the methodological fallacies of Marxism and nationalism which his own words so evidently commit. What we are presented with is a Fanon distinguished for his creative imagination, his sensibility and sensitivity to the suffering of humanity at large. His ‘soul’, perhaps, as well as his mind; effectively all that is not associated with his physical being-in-the-world.

Such a discursive and ideological disembodiment is appropriate, or decorous, from a thinker like Gilroy for whom the corporeal domain is evidently reducible to suffering (as we have already seen), spurious claims to political solidarity, racial biopolitics, essentialising cultural ideologies, objectification, militarism, and commodification (examples abound, but see for instance AR, pp. 24-5; p. 37; p. 63; p. 83; p. 260). At no point that I can find is the body human presented with positive potential as a zone of legitimate, pleasurable expression or resistive politics. (The closest, perhaps, to

non-negativity is found in Gilroy's discussion of genomics and its capacity to disrupt racial thinking; but what is affirmed here is scientific knowledge rather than the body itself.) Thus, for example, he laments that fact that 'The body, in motion on the ball court, striving against machinery in the gym, at the wheel of the sports utility vehicle, between the sheets, and finally decked out in branded finery on the mortuary slab, is now all there is' (*AR*, p. 198). The body is all there is; even the colonised's muscular dreams 'of action and aggression', identified by Fanon, have been co-opted by 'corporate multicultural' (p. 255-6). So all that remains is to disassociate ideas from the polluted bodies that enclose and support them.

Gilroy's approach also effectively isolates Fanon from membership of any community that is not an abstract or global humanity. This marks a dramatic transformation from his earlier work. Communitarian sympathies are evident in *There Ain't No Black*; that first book productively enlists social movement theories to analyse, and affirm, local, anti-statist, forms of collectivity, to which diverse musicians are linked. (That book also celebrates recreational black physical expression, arguing that it liberates the body from the legacy and ideology of labour.) *The Black Atlantic* begins to differentiate black individuals from communities. Intellectuals (including Martin Delany, Du Bois, Richard Wright), are assigned a different function from that of black community; the former operate as mandarins who frequently strain against the limits of racial belonging, while the latter serves as the collective bearer of authentic racial-vernacular culture. In *Against Race* and *After Empire*, Gilroy appears to regard community with suspicion, as little more than vehicles for authoritarian leadership and fascistic ideology (the European community is something of an exception here).

Individuals (especially intellectuals) accordingly gain greater credibility, as the only vehicles of cosmopolitan value.

It is not surprising that several critical responses to *Against Race* and *After Empire* have focused on what these works exclude from view. He has been taken to task for failing to address the ghastly material conditions that shape contemporary black society and culture (Hill Collins et al 2002)); for ignoring the contours of post-emancipation US racial history (Robotham 2005); for marginalizing black nationalist solidarity while foregrounding white activists (Roberts 2006); for neglecting the contributions of the Caribbean Arts movement in the United Kingdom (Boyce Davies 2002). Scholars have criticised his utopian promotion of rootless cosmopolitanism for excluding consideration of the legislative and economic dimensions of globalization (Robotham 2005). His raciological analysis has been faulted for its effort to quarantine racism from Enlightenment humanism (Gikandi 2002).<sup>4</sup>

To this list of exclusions and analytic imbalances might be added others: Gilroy overlooks the major contributions of contemporary Afro-futurist speculative fiction to the project of planetary critique, just as he excludes the operations of contemporary radical fiction in general; his account of British convivial culture omits to acknowledge the considerable presence of multiracial musical production, of black British writers and artists. More broadly Gilroy can be charged with neglecting an entire arena of contemporary black and third world cultural production that is not mass-popular and mass-commodified. He can be regarded as giving a disproportionate historical and conceptual place to fascism at the expense of capitalist imperialism. Indeed, ideologies of black imperialism would certainly merit more space than Gilroy gives them, and at least

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<sup>4</sup> See also the insightful discussions of this work by Bhasin, Mullen and Palumbo-Liu.

as much space as alleged black fascism. Similarly his attentiveness to the exclusionary ideology of black separatism is unmatched by attentiveness to the operations of white supremacist ideology and legislation.

These are important criticisms. But their force is diminished if they judge Gilroy without taking on board his anti-materialist, anti-disciplinary and anti-corporeal tenets, which animate his prose technique as well as the contents of his arguments. He does not set out to be accountable to the disciplines of sociology, history, literary-cultural studies and postcolonial studies. Rather than be judged for his deficiencies as a historian, for instance, he is perhaps best seen as a moralist who works in terms of broad epochal 'epistemes' (the eighteenth century, World War Two). Where he can be readily faulted is for not making clear the terms and limits of his approach. And for making authoritative statements such as that 'democratic and cosmopolitan traditions ... have been all but expunged from today's black political imaginary' (p. 356). Gilroy's partial readings of Fanon, like his negative pronouncements upon the condition of black contemporary political culture, would satisfy more if they generalised less and qualified more. No one can altogether escape the confines of particularism, of location, of 'camp' thinking, or of the human body.

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