

## Melancholy Whiteness (or, Shame-Faced in Shadows)

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*The age of childhood, in which the sense of shame is unknown, seems a paradise when we look back upon it later, and paradise itself is nothing but the mass-fantasy of the childhood of the individual. This is why in paradise men are naked and unashamed... until the moment arrives when shame and fear awaken; expulsion follows.*  
~Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams"

"This book had certainly no need for a preface; especially as it is not addressed to us." So wrote Jean-Paul Sartre of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*—in the preface, naturally (1961/2005, p. lvii). "I have written one, however," Sartre immediately continues, "to carry the dialectic through to its conclusion:" a bloody one. Sartre pledges to go under the knife he wields himself for a surgical extraction of the colonizer within. He bids the European reader—presumptively, white men, as Judith Butler points out (2015, p. 172)—to follow his lead and submit to this painful but necessary corrective procedure.

What is Sartre playing at in the preface of *Wretched*? And who is he playing to, in his mode of address?

I came across this puzzle in Judith Butler's stimulating new book, *Senses of the Subject*, where it animates the final and most recent of the seven essays in the volume. Written over a twenty year period, they are full of the gifts characteristic of Butler's work—ideas which enlighten, surprise, and perplex you by turns. As I'll go on to explain, I'm tempted by a different answer to the above puzzle than the one Butler proposes. However, it is inspired by her views on subjectivity, the nature of ethics, and the relationship between them. And I'll suggest that Butler's antecedent notion of *melancholy* illuminates what turns out to be a very general problem: how to break the news to the historically privileged of their shameful, ongoing legacy of, e.g., colonialism, white supremacy, and racism, without inducing the kind of shame that seeks an irrevocable break between the self and the other—or, simply, to break one or the other, if not both, of these subjects.

But first, a few words about Butler's overall ethical picture.

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The human being in analytic ethics is very much an agent. They are a doer of deeds, author of their own actions. Their character is a matter of their dispositions to act more

or less well, in relation to others or for the wider social good. They inhabit a world of *persons*, which may or may not encompass some non-human animals. And they tend to be encouraged to stand at a respectful distance from these persons, exhibiting “*achtung*,” Kantian respect, attention.

Butler offers us a very different picture of the ethical scene (tellingly, and happily, I do not want to say ‘realm’), to which I’m predisposed to be quite sympathetic.<sup>1</sup> On Butler’s view, if I am reading her correctly, we (a pronoun we can allow to have a somewhat open-ended referent) are simultaneously agents and subjects—acted upon as we act, and mutually impressionable via sense and sensibility. It is not just that others impinge on us causally, and make a difference to our sense of self, which nobody would deny. A *constitutive* dependency—or, better, entanglement—is at issue here. Subjectivity is not thinkable without inter-subjectivity. Who I am depends partly on how I am regarded, treated, addressed, called upon, and spoken of by other subjects, with whom I share a historical, social, and material world. Our impressionability or susceptibility—and hence vulnerability—haunts our attempts to make something of ourselves, or to break with our history. “There remains that history from which I broke, and that breakage installs me here and now.” (2015, p. 6) Yet, for Butler:

The point is not to undermine any conceit we may have that we act or desire independently and to show that we are but the effects of prior and more powerful forces. Rather, the task is to see that what we call “independence” is always established through a set of formative relations that do not simply fall away as action takes place, even though those formative relations sometimes are banished from consciousness, even arguably *must be* banished to some extent. If I can come to touch and feel and sense the world, it is only because this “I,” before it could be called an “I,” was handled and sensed, addressed, and enlivened. (2015, p. 11)

So it’s not that Butler thinks we are helpless or passive as subjects in the face of address which we take to miss the mark (rightly or wrongly). Rather, such forms of address are something we will need to contest, resist, or grapple with, if only by actively ignoring them.

Butler often speaks—in a suggestive but initially somewhat elusive vein—not only of breaking with our history but being *undone* by our encounters with other subjects:

Already undone, or undone from the start, we are formed, and as formed, we come to be always partially undone by what we come to sense and know. What follows is that form of relationality that we might call “ethical:” a certain demand or obligation impinged upon me, and the response relies on my capacity to affirm this having been acted on, formed into one who can respond to this or that call. (2015, p. 11)

When Butler writes “from the start,” it is not a mere figure of speech, either. We are subjects in formation, insofar as we are subject to address—and somebody to others—before we are somebody to ourselves, in developing a sense of identity. As an infant or young child:

One is called a name or addressed as a “you” prior to any sense of individuation, and calling, especially as it is repeated in different ways, starts to form a subject who calls itself by those same terms, learning how to shift the “you” to an “I” or to a gendered

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<sup>1</sup> Especially in its emphasis on the ‘call and response’ structure of the most basic ethical relations, in the metaphysics of morals, and the essentially embodied and social quality of desire itself. See Manne, 2017.

third person, a “he” or a “she.” There is always disturbance in that shift, which is why self-reference, enabled by the scene of address, can and does take on meanings that exceed the aims of those who introduced the terms of discourse through address. So addressing someone as “you” may well solicit a recognition that is “I” who is meant by that second person, but that “I” may well resist or shift or reject the various semantics that get associated with that “you.” In other words, “Yes, it is me, but I am not the one you think I am.” (2015, p. 12)

Much of this applies, I want to suggest, to moral as well as social development. We are formed as *moral* beings in ways we do not choose and which we may have to break from in order to respond to others’ calls and ethical demands on us aright. But this is not just a matter of freeing ourselves of false consciousness and coming to appreciate the historical and social facts we ought to. It may be a matter of developing alternative narratives that help us to muster resistance, or even consist in temporary illusions that help us to lose illusions that go deeper and do more damage. As Butler puts it: “Our formation does not suddenly fall away after certain breaks or ruptures: they become important to the story we tell about ourselves or to other modes of self-understanding.” Again: “There remains the history from which I broke, and that breakage installs me here and now.” (2015, p. 6)

With that, back to Sartre’s preface. Why, whence, the drama? What, to whom, is he (un)doing?

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Butler begins her chapter on Sartre and Fanon by considering Sartre’s warning to his privileged brethren: they will not be addressed directly in the text that follows. When Fanon takes over, they will be consigned to the role of eavesdropping in the shadows. They will be spoken *of*, and talked *about*, but not *to*, by the sons of the colonized. Indeed, the heirs of colonialism stand to lose their very humanity, just as the colonized were once stripped of theirs, by being enslaved and exploited and excluded from social relations—or put to a ‘social death,’ to follow Butler’s invocation of Orlando Patterson’s notion (2015, pp. 171-178). The colonized were also—again, in being presumptively male—*emasculated*. In the image Sartre conjures, the sons of the disempowered fathers are now gathered around a fire, talking amongst themselves, not even bothering to lower their voices or speak in hushed tones. Sartre and his brethren are left out in the cold, shrouded in darkness. They are a matter of indifference. They are not even hated. “*Les zombies, c’est vous.*” (1961/2005, p. xlvi) (*Parle pour toi, Sartre?*)

So what is in it for Fanon’s historically privileged reader, setting aside a proclivity for sheer masochism? A sense of themselves in the eyes of the other in history: hence a mirror of sorts, says Sartre, for moral self-examination. “Our noble souls are racist,” he proclaims, rather grandly. (2005/1961, p. lv) “What does Fanon care if you do or do not read his book?” he then asks, disdainfully. But “have the courage to read it,” Sartre goes on to bid his fellows, “primarily because it will make you feel ashamed, and shame, as Marx said, is a revolutionary feeling. You see I, too, cannot lose my subjective illusion. I, too, say to you: “All is lost unless...” I, a European, am stealing my enemy’s book and turning it into a way of healing Europe.” (2005/1961, p. xlix) So: a dismissal, then a summons—“*approchez, écoutez*”—to what amounts to surgery and shaming. It’s not much of a sales pitch, as these things go: pro forma. “You know full well we are exploiters.” (2015, p. lviii) The pronouns leave one wondering.

For, as Butler astutely points out, the historical other is being *excluded* even as such exclusion is denounced and lamented, with much fanfare, by Sartre. On Butler's reading, Sartre is attempting to enact a decolonizing process, in which the privileged reader is marginalized, expelled, and hence rendered capable of *empathizing* with the plight of the colonized. The subject of Sartre's address is undone and remade as a new kind of man: one who has suffered being cast into the shadows, or consigned to lurk in darkness. Butler:

Decentering and even rejection are absorbed, undergone, and a certain undoing of the *presumption* of racial privilege is enacted between the lines, or rather in the nonaddress that is paradoxically delivered through Sartre's preface to the European. The preface thus functions as a strange mode of delivery, handing the white reader the discourse not intended for him and so handing him dislocation and rejection as the condition of possibility for his comprehension. Sartre's writing to the European reader is a way of acting upon that reader: positioning him outside the circle and establishing that peripheral status as an epistemological requirement for understanding the condition of colonization. The European undergoes a loss of privilege at the same time that he is asked to submit to an empathetic enactment with the position of the socially excluded and effaced. (2015, p. 174)

This view of things seems clearly right under the assumption that being thus relegated counts as a downfall, for one in the position of a white male European reader, or someone similarly privileged. And Sartre himself certainly speaks in those terms—vehemently and repeatedly. But I found myself wondering about a different way of construing his performance—with “performance” being the operative word here. It may be that Sartre is playing with his audience, being a bit sneaky. Even if this was not his intention, there are reasons to resist his account of what his preface in fact achieves. After all, being left out in the cold, in the shadows, is one side of a coin whose flipside is a cool, safe, hiding place.

For the privileged reader, Sartre's preface may hence offer relief from the “strains of involvement” with the historical other, to borrow a phrase from P.F. Strawson (1962/2008, pp. 10, 14, 18). Such encounters (metaphorical and literal) may, after all, be confronting in ways that are expressly described as being the subject's undoing. Consider a Meursault, the narrator of Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, who comes face to face with “Raymond's Arab”—who had been “shadowing” the latter—on that harmonious, then shattered day. Meursault clutches the revolver concealed in his jacket pocket (1942/1946, p. 39). Under the unyielding pressure of the heat and light of the sun, Meursault is incapable of retreating, or even standing still. He advances toward his target. They had first come across each other as members of two opposing racial groups: Meursault, Raymond, and Marie versus “the Arabs,” whose number we are not told, and whose gender (i.e., male) we need not be told as readers. On Meursault's telling:

They stared at us silently, in the special way these people have—as if we were blocks of stone or dead trees. Raymond whispered that the second Arab from the left was “his man,” and I thought he looked rather worried. However, he assured me that all that was ancient history. . . There was no point in hanging about here. Halfway to the bus stop he glanced back over his shoulder and said the Arabs weren't following. I, too, looked back. They were exactly as before, gazing in the same vague way at the spot where we had been. (1942/1946, p. 32)

Now, on the beach, the solitary figure is but a hazy blur, his face shadowed by a rock. And yet Meursault catches “glimpses of his eyes glowing between the half-closed lids.” A veil of tears and a film of sweat blur the lines of sight between them, as if to try to ease the tension of mutual visibility. But such ephemera are no match for the glint of the knife “the Arab” pulls, totalling the effect of the sun on Meursault, blinding him. He feels the trigger give and hears his first shot land, meet with flesh. He fires four more shots into the inert form, “on which it leaves no visible trace”—their being “loud, fateful knocks on the door of his undoing.” (1942/1946, p. 39) He is undone, and unravels at his trial; then, his execution.

Meursault feels no shame and little fear, for lack of a self-conception, until the very end of the novel. He is, as Sartre remarked in his probing commentary on *The Stranger*, written some twenty years prior to his penning the preface of *Wretched*, “an innocent.” But many of us err in the other direction, in being highly shame-prone in social relations—as Sartre of course made vivid. Our sense of self is liable to be disrupted instantly, and radically, if temporarily, by an awareness of what we must look like to other people—e.g., ridiculous or derisible. Picture Sartre in one of his most memorable poses, crouching before a door, realizing the woman he been spying on had caught him looking at her through the keyhole. For want of a better hiding place, he is reduced to shame in her eyes, and sees himself as she does: with scorn or contempt, even disgust or nausea.

Something similar goes, I think, for our being-for-others in history. Hence the desire, in part, of the historically privileged for barriers to mutual visibility—e.g., walls, screens, jail cells, and, as we now see, shadows—to interpose between themselves and those with whom they have a shameful history. Such barriers both prevent the ethical impingement of the other, and also the loss of esteem in the eyes of moral authorities who side with the marginalized against the hitherto privileged.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild’s ethnography of white conservatives in rural Louisiana (2016) is illuminating in this connection. Most of Hochschild’s subjects were active in the tea party six years ago, when she began the project. All of the people who figure prominently in her narrative became Donald Trump supporters, albeit with various degrees of enthusiasm. Their speech abounds with metaphors of physical barriers, opaque and impenetrable, which they want to interpose between themselves and the other, as well as the other’s elite liberal champions. They fantasize about screens and firewalls even before Trump introduced the idea of building a wall on the US border with Mexico, subjecting Muslims to “extreme screening,” and ratcheting up border protection.

Take Madonna, for one example, a talented gospel singer who is beloved in the community. Madonna just loves Rush Limbaugh—primarily, it emerges, because he is contemptuous of feminists, calling them ‘feminazis.’ Madonna feels feminists look down on women like her for not believing that women are men’s equals. And so she is grateful for what she calls a “screen” and Hochschild calls a “firewall” which Limbaugh effectively places between Madonna and the “catcalls” she imagines coming at her from feminists. (Hochschild being the author of the feminist classic, *The Second Shift* (1989/2012), notably—Madonna allows Hochschild seems nice though).

Take Lee, for another example, who is in many ways an empathetic as well as conscientious person. He goes to considerable lengths and risks his own safety to save a bird stranded in a marsh of toxic chemicals. He gives the bird CPR, and manages to revive it. Lee also tells Hochschild that he thinks that Muslims who try to enter the country should be locked up in Guantanamo Bay. When Hochschild, who almost never interjects with her own political views in her interviews, points out the vast majority of the imprisoned would be innocent, Lee concedes the point. But he says they could lively up the place, take down the fences. He’s not joking. He wants the other not punished so much as excluded by all means possible. Why? He’s worried that, if they come to America, they’ll have all the same rights as he does. And, sotto voce (I suggest), they will have the power to shame him.

No wonder Trump’s idea of building that wall—and making Mexico pay for it—resonated with so many. It promises protection not just from imagined concrete threats, but from being looked down on by the other.

In light of this, another reading of the preface comes into view: Sartre may be offering privileged readers a place to hide and listen, so that they might better withstand the pressure which Fanon's text puts them under. And this by means of a metaphor which implies (I think falsely) that the privileged will not come in for scrutiny, condemnation, or shaming in what follows.<sup>3</sup> Their feet will not be held to the fire; and their cheeks will not be left burning. For their faces are cloaked in shadows; and the other's eyes are not upon them. Nor can the historical other point an accusatory finger or render a guilty verdict unless the former can pick the latter out of a crowd, make an identification. The absence of a second-personal connection may hence be a mercy.

In addition to being protected, the privileged reader also has a luminary in the form of Sartre in their corner, authoritative yet fraternal. They will brave the shadows together. Whether or not by design (a question I wouldn't presume to weigh in on), Sartre gives *Wretched* the air of a kind of moral adventure for those in his target audience. The question we must now ask is: will they get any further? What might be their destination? (How) might the passive act of listening turn into active engagement and reconciliation with the other in the long run? Will they emerge from the shadows any the better or the wiser?

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"Let's face it," Butler wrote, in work predating *Senses*. "We're undone by each other. And if we're not we're missing something." (2005/2015, p. 19) She goes on to ask whose lives, when lost, we find it intelligible to grieve. Our answer, she argues, reflects whom we see as fully human. As we have just seen though, those who are included in this sense of our "common humanity" are also capable of reducing us to shame when we wrong them. And the moral judgment of others on their behalf can also feel damning, decisive, fatal. No wonder then that avoidance—a deliberate attempt to "miss" the other, or block mutual impressionability—is subsequently so common.

Given all this, it ought not to surprise us that gaining a sense of the reality of others, who were previously out of sight or relegated to the shadows, or deemed beneath our notice and in no position to judge us, is not an easy matter, psychically and socially. Butler's ethical picture suggests that the privileged stand to lose their *freedom from moral shame*, on the one hand, and *moral pride of place*, on the other, relative to those who are emerging or have become their social equals. In other words, they stand to *lose their sense of moral innocence*, as well as being the blessed or chosen people, in the eyes of the powers-that-be relative to the marginalized.

This loss is likely to be strenuously resisted. We can see this by turning to Butler's notion of melancholy (or 'melancholia'), which she theorizes in contrast to mourning (1995), following Freud's original distinction—in classic work Butler further embroiders in *Senses*, in relation to her idea of an "ethics under pressure." Perhaps most famously, Butler has argued that the disavowal of *queer* desires leads to melancholia in a homophobic society.

The idea, at its heart, is simple enough: in a homophobic society, or even a more passively hetero-normative one, same-sex sexual and emotional attachment is verboten. So a subject may suffer a form of loss—or something approaching loss, as I'll go on to

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<sup>3</sup> For the most part, Fanon seems to describe the situation using the third-person plural to refer to both the colonized people and the heirs to colonialism. And he speaks alone, with great authority, to anyone who will listen.

explain in a moment—as these desires are denied, disavowed, and stigmatized. But the incipient sense of loss remains inchoate and unnameable—and resistant to naming, since admitting it would render a serious blow to the ego. As the result of something like ego protection, denial, and other self-protective mechanisms, the incipient loss is reconciled at the level of a subject’s identity. Here, the subject comes to identify as exclusively heterosexual—not having homosexual desires and attachments is part of who she is as a person (she would insist). To rediscover what she has lost—even by allowing herself to feel same-sex attraction, let alone to act on it—would be a personal and social transformation. Often, that simply won’t happen, given that heterosexual social identities bolster patriarchal social structures, and hence are in turn underwritten with violence.

So melancholia involves a loss which is resisted rather than fully acknowledged. And it results in what might have been lost, or else regained, remaining not-quite-lost—be it a person, object, abstraction, ideal, or, in some cases, cherished illusion. Melancholia contrasts with mourning, where the loss or perceived loss is reconciled with reality, and attitudes are withdrawn from the absent or missing object. The melancholic person is hence in a kind of limbo—consigned to a state of perpetually losing. She hence cannot let go, and is forever *at a loss*—and at a loss to name the source of her sadness and ambivalence. The result, in Freud’s view, is noisy self-abasement—the expression of an inward stripping away of the ego. As this goes on, melancholia may turn suicidal. On Butler’s adaptation of Freud, melancholy subjects have a death wish.

I suggest that melancholy may also be a useful concept with which to understand an incipient loss of moral innocence or fall from grace for the historically privileged—incipient partly because it often goes unrecognized and unnamed in broader public discourse. We tend to focus exclusively on the loss of economic advantage and social status in discussing the rise of white nationalism in America. But such distinctively *moral* loss on the part of white Americans is independently prone to be disavowed and resisted, since it exposes subjects to shame and losing pride, by hypothesis. (Predictions that appear to be borne out by the empirical realities, if Arlie Russell Hochschild’s discussions in *Strangers* (2016) are broadly indicative.) The denial or disavowal of a shameful historical legacy is an integral part of white ignorance; and such ignorance is bliss, a childish paradise, an Eden. It is also an illusory one, which comes at the expense of others, to put it mildly—and hence, as Butler shows, at the price of subjects being ethically “brittle,” prone to breakage. In other words they exhibit white fragility, to invoke Robin DiAngelo’s apt notion. (2011)

But what to do about this? It’s not easy to break subjects of the illusion of their own innocence without breaking them irrevocably—all the more so since part of privilege is being protected from criticisms which subsequently feel like condemnation, and slights which subsequently feel like wounding.

Butler’s account of melancholy subjects who resist a loss of moral innocence also seems to fit with the facts on the ground, e.g., the identities that spring up around the attempt to make people face their shameful historical legacy. Consider the Australian movement against “a black armband view” of history—i.e., an accurate view, with respect to the shameful treatment of Indigenous people on the part of white colonialist invaders. It took over a decade-long campaign for a national apology—specifically, an expression of shame, as distinct from an inapt and now obsolete admission of personal guilt—to be issued by the Australian government, on behalf of non-indigenous people. Consider too the white nationalism which is a new form of so-called identity politics in

the US—and the defiant embrace of Hillary Clinton’s admittedly ill-advised comment during her 2016 presidential campaign that half of Donald Trump’s supporters were in the “basket of deplorables,” and even “irredeemable,” in being racist, xenophobic, sexist, misogynistic, etc. Clinton’s impolitic remark led to the sort of noisy self-abasement which Freud associates with melancholy—e.g., emblazoning such slogans on commemorative tee shirts worn by people in the communities Hochschild studied (as she noted in an interview just prior to the election). And confederate flags fly in the South partly as a testament to melancholy whiteness: the loss of a sense of innocence in history is imminent, hence threatening.

Moreover, without the characteristic comforts and protections associated with a position of privilege, comfort and protection come to be repudiated—disavowed as unnecessary, unhealthy, or even immoral. They are needed at least as much as ever, if not more so, but the desires are verboten. Hence identities like resilience and toughness come to be venerated, superficially paradoxically—just as the identity of being heterosexual is foisted on the person who would otherwise be queer in a homophobic society. One is *not* a homosexual; one *refuses* to be a victim. These disavowals mask a taboo subject, and render certain desires and moral histories inexpressible.

Finally, and necessarily too briefly, there are moral losses beyond innocence which deserve to be considered here too. The historically dominant can no longer expect to have exclusive access, or even to be first in line, when it comes to moral sympathy, attention, and other forms of support, if the powers-that-be are oriented to all persons equally. There will now be other people with just as much right to claim the moral spotlight as they have had, historically. Moreover, those who used to have priority in claiming the role of *victims* may therefore feel resentful, jealous, and demoralized. And vilified too, if they are held to be oppressors and wrongdoers, rather than heroes, in culturally salient moral narratives; for they are also used to having first dibs on the moral high ground.

How to even begin to approach these problems? I suspect that a general solution will not be on the cards. But Sartre’s preface points to a possibility worth taking seriously in this and other particular cases: make facing shame and loss of innocence a veritable point of *pride*, by presenting it as a little bit heroic. “Out noble souls are racist.” How gallant of us to notice, and nobly face this, with Sartre. Perhaps we can remain “good white people” in our own eyes after all, then. Shame is rendered tolerable by being wrought into a narrative that makes breaking with a shameful history a sign of character and integrity. This is the kind of complex self-reckoning where it’s tempting to say, following Butler: “one makes the break precisely in order to survive (breaking with what breaks you)”—or which at least one fears may do so otherwise. (2015, p. 9)

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“Fanon hides nothing”—as Sartre notes repeatedly, and admiringly, in his preface (1961/2005, p. xlvi, xlvi). This admiration is further evidenced by the passage from an interview with Sartre at seventy which Butler cites in the final chapter in *Senses*. Still, at the same time, and much as Sartre celebrates Fanon’s subsequent refusal to spare his privileged brethren shame, perhaps he thought it prudent to offer them some refuge in the form of shade and shadows, so they might better withstand the heat and light of the truths Fanon gives voice to. And they might at least then listen—and emerge from the shadows to face the other fully in time, if ever they were going to.

On the way of looking it I've mooted, Sartre stages a performance which allows his ilk to reconceptualise themselves as somewhat heroic figures in a melodrama in which they star. They are not being stripped of something they're clutching; they're proudly choosing to relinquish their illicit sense of unalloyed pride in their legacy. If I am right, then the effect (best case scenario) would be to transform their melancholic refusal to *lose face*—i.e., to grow shame-faced in the eyes of the historical other—into a subject whose very identity encompasses nobly *facing such loss* of innocence and reputation when a Fanon calls on them to do so. This is not so much a remaking of men as an inducement to reimagine the figure they cut in history—hence allowing mourning and, perhaps, reparation and reconciliation, someday.

Obviously, it would be better if nobody needed to coddle the privileged, and lead them gently from darkness toward a mirror in flattering light. But sometimes, perhaps, it is necessary, to break through the melancholy disavowals of shame that are not revolutionary, so much as violent and destructive. Inasmuch as that is case, Fanon certainly shouldn't have to be the one to pander to the prideful white man, and hence lower his powerful voice one decibel (to echo Sartre's warning about what *not* to expect from the text).

So maybe Sartre decided to do as he bade his fellows, and “make the most” of the opportunity to usher them to safety, without telling them what he was up to (1961/2005, p. xlix). That would spoil the illusion of their braving the shadows together. His preface is a ruse, a cover, a pretext, on my reading.

I finally realized what Sartre's words reminded me of—and in the original French too, according to my informants. It struck me as having the quality of a children's bedtime story: vivid, didactic, Manichean, soothing. This is a tale of facing one's shame (“our noble souls are racist”) and being redeemed in the process.

But in the end, are we? By whose authority would we say so?<sup>4</sup>

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