



**Internal Racism:
A Psychoanalytic
Approach to Race
and Difference**

By M. Fakhry Davids.
Palgrave Macmillan. 2011.
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Racism has been analysed extensively from a sociological perspective, but (as the author of this book points out) 'psychoanalysis has been slow to engage with the subject of racism' (p. 144). This new book by a contemporary British psychoanalyst starts off by claiming to take a fundamentally different approach (when compared with other books written by psychoanalysts) by 'treating racism as a subject of proper clinical investigation in its own right' (p. 11). By this, the author seems to mean that his book provides a psychoanalytical theory derived from clinical

work that accounts for racist behaviour in terms of 'internal mechanisms' – hence the title of the book *Internal Racism*.

In the first part of his book, the author explains how he sees racism manifesting itself in terms of internal psychological dynamics; in the second part, he discusses Fanon's work, the 'psychoanalytic silence on race', including Freud's reluctance to comment on anti-Semitism, and he considers how racial bias has affected psychoanalytic theory. Finally, he explains how he thinks the notion of internal racism could elucidate expressions of racism in society.

This book is well written and a welcome addition to the literature on 'race' and racism. I think that its main contribution is to psychoanalytic theory propounded by the author in Part 1 of the book. There, the author speaks mainly to psychoanalysts, or at least readers well versed in psychoanalytic ideology and language. For practising psychoanalysts and for psychotherapists and counsellors using psychoanalytic theory, this first part should be useful in understanding and dealing with issues that occur in psychotherapeutic interactions regarding 'race' and cultural difference. The author's take on the relative silence on racism in psychoanalytic literature would interest a more general readership. The attempt in Part 3 to interpret 'institutional racism' in a psychological framework using the theory propounded in Part 1 is interesting but not, I think, very convincing.

Suman Fernando Visiting Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, London Metropolitan University, Ladbroke House, 62–66 Highbury Grove, London N5 2AD, UK. Email: sumanfernando@btinternet.com

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