

WHAT FANON SAID

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WHAT FANON SAID

A PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION
TO HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT

Lewis R. Gordon

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

NEW YORK 2015

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data available online at catalog.loc.gov.

Printed in the United States of America

17 16 15 5 4 3 2 1

First edition

To Jane

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Foreword

Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun

More than fifty years after his death, Frantz Fanon still ignites violent passions. This “outlaw thinker,” as Lewis Gordon calls him, has become an object either of worship or a mixture of hatred and fear, especially in France, where he is not yet completely accepted as an author legitimately to be read and discussed in academic circles. Leftists do quote him or, more often, mention his name, but they rarely do so with any proper knowledge of his works. In their minds he plays the role of a francophone Che Guevara, an antiracist, anticolonialist advocate of an old-fashioned third-worldist and antimondialist politics. For others, he represents nothing but a past revolutionary theory that apologizes for violence and is, because of that, unacceptable in a world where only the powerful can overtly use (extreme) violence and be highly praised. Che Guevara could have been rejected for the same reasons. But it is not the case. There is a romantic representation of Che who, in some way, became a sort of popular hero, represented on posters in teenagers’ rooms or on mugs and T-shirts, but whom nearly nobody reads anymore. Both were doctors; both were deeply involved in revolutionary movements; both died very young and attractive in tragic circumstances where the CIA probably took an active part. But one of them was, notwithstanding his youth, one of the most original thinkers of his century, maybe the most original thinker—a sort of Mozart of thought, and he was black. Of course, I am speaking of Fanon.

Gordon reminds us that the hegemonic view is that theory is supposed to be left to white theorists (I shall add: better if they are male). Blacks are

supposed to offer only their “experience,” or to be followers and imitators, in other words to put a white mask on their black faces. But the experience of a black man or woman is literally not taken as a human experience, able to be universalized, because in the racial and colonial point of view, black people are not structurally regarded as human beings. In France where the use of the word “race” is prohibited if it applies to human beings, where a 1991 law prohibits all sorts of discriminations, African artists and craftsmen, from ten to fifty years old, coming from Ivory Coast were, not so long ago, exhibited in a large zoological park, as a part of an *African safari*. This exhibition took place in 1994. Black African musicians had to give shows, without being paid (they were supposed to be rewarded in their local money when they went home), and the children used in the exhibit were not sent to school. They were all housed in awful conditions, without even proper beds. They could not go anywhere because their passports had been taken from them and locked in the zoo owner’s safe, and they were under constant threat. The craftsmen, who lived in the same miserable conditions, were put together and exhibited in an “African village,” called Bamboula. Bamboula is supposed to be the name of an African musical instrument and a form of dance. But at that time it was also the name of a cookie topped with chocolate and sold in a box decorated with the picture of an ape-like little “negro.” Something like the famous Banania cereal slogan “Y’a bon Banania,” which Gordon discusses in the third chapter of this book. The cookies were produced not far from the zoo (in the western part of France, near Nantes, which was one of the main centers of the transatlantic slave trade). The owner of the zoo had political and economic support for his show, which was supposed to draw many visitors in the region, interested in these living creatures from Africa. The intervention of trade unionists¹ and grassroots associations, followed by a press campaign, succeeded in putting an end to this spectacle. And, after protests and public complaints, Bamboula cookies were sold under another name, and with another picture on the box.

This story is very revealing. It shows how antiblack racism, with all its specificities (blackness being here associated in the social unconscious with animality), is still present in France, despite all the official political correctness.² So we urgently have to read what Fanon really said. But still there are people to fight this type of racism. And that is something for which to be grateful to Fanon, even if *Black Skin, White Masks* is not at all a plain denunciation of racism among others. It is a descent into hell and a road out of hell, where Fanon, who experienced collapsing into the zone of nonbeing

and exploding, asserts his full humanity through producing his theory, the theory issued from this experience and deeply rooted in it. *Black Skin, White Masks* is not only a tale rich with profound critique, where all the literary genres are mixed, but also a completely new theorization, where thought is originated from a sexed, colored, and colonized suffering body. It is the body of a man who knows what hell means and who will devote all of his short life to those whom he called “the damned.”

Ancient literature, including Homer’s *Odyssey* and Virgil’s *Aeneid*, has taught us the necessity of a journey through hell before facing light, life, love, and action. Sigmund Freud, who opened his *Interpretation of Dreams* with a quotation from Virgil: “*Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo*,”³ doesn’t tell anything else. And Fanon was, according to Edward Said, “surely [Freud’s] most disputatious heir.”⁴ The verse of the *Aeneid* was also the motto of Ferdinand Lassalle, the nineteenth-century leader of the first German workers’ party. Factories and mines looked so much like hell! In *Black Skin, White Masks*, theorization goes through this wandering through and out of hell, toward the height (or the light) of decolonial thought. In the famous Italian poem that seems to constitute the background of Lewis Gordon’s reading, we see everything through the eyes of Dante, who himself is guided by Virgil. Gordon’s book guides us in this extremely complex and enigmatic text and enables us to follow Fanon, whose words can’t then be considered as if they were just a contribution to some theoretical works among others. Fanon’s thought is not an addition to the stack of the productions of Western thought, with some special features: a “colored” writer, committed to an outdated anticolonial cause. *Black Skin, White Masks* is at the same time a gap and a bridge. As Gordon writes, “*A new type of text was born.*” But this text resonates with human culture, and it is a major contribution to the building of this humanity to come, this humanity for which we are still struggling and waiting.

For Gordon, *Black Skin, White Masks* seems definitely to be Fanon’s major philosophical book, and he reads the rest of Fanon’s work, as well as his whole life, in the light of this first text. That provides us with extraordinary insights, even if in France we have been used to giving priority to *Les damnés de la terre*, which Gordon prefers to translate as “The Damned of the Earth” but which is well known in English as *The Wretched of the Earth*, and to the articles written during the Algerian period. As a matter of fact, when Fanon arrived in Algeria, he knew very little about Algerian society, this society that had been systematically destroyed by French colonization.⁵ He knew also

very little about the past of the country. In France, he had some Algerian patients, but that was all. Meanwhile, as a very competent psychiatrist and exceptional human being, he paid attention to what people said and felt and to the way they behaved. In a country where blacks are still racialized, because they are supposed to be the descendants of slaves and are, for example, called *haratins* in Mauritania, a pattern maintained in Algeria and Morocco, he settled down as a French and black doctor, treating his patients never like “others” but as selves or human subjects. His solidarity with the Algerian people removed many prejudices. His own experience and the way he built a theory out of it have been determinant in the connections he established between his practice as a psychiatrist and his political commitment. That was particularly striking where women were concerned. Similar to the filmmaker Gillo Pontecorvo in his beautiful *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), Fanon understood, for example, perfectly the political meaning of women’s dress codes and the way women could play between these codes to express what we call now their agency.

But I want to remind readers here of a paper Fanon together with Charles Géromini, who was a medical resident in Blida’s hospital and who also joined the Algerian National Liberation Front, delivered in 1956 at the Congress of Alienist Physicians (Psychiatrists) (Congrès des médecins aliénistes). The topic of the paper, quite a technical one; the title was “The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) among Muslim Women.” French researchers had noticed that Algerian women were not able to create a story out of the drawings they had to look at (for example, a boy playing the violin), and that had been attributed to their “primitivism.” Fanon and Géromini explained, on the contrary, that if Algerian women do not answer the test, it is because, when they take this test, they are in a hostile environment, and “in front of unusual objects and of nonidentifiable situations.” The absence of an answer makes sense; it is, indeed, full of sense. Silence, refusal, and revolution are the only appropriate answers. The silence does not question the Algerian women who have to undergo the testing but instead the test itself and the assumptions (racist and I shall add sexist) of the psychologists engineering and administering the tests. The revolution is at the same time a political one and an epistemological one. When Fanon and Géromini consider the colonized men and women as full subjects, when they legitimize totally their individual and social experience, Fanon and Géromini oblige Western and European social and medical sciences to take a critical look at themselves. Fifty years later, there is still a very long way to reach this stage of reflexivity.

Fanon went further. The same year (1956) he showed that unlike the Western world, which invented institutions of segregation and imprisonment for so-called lunatics, the Arab and Muslim world had created care centers where “the credit of the patient remains intact” (“*le crédit du malade reste intact*”), as in the psychoanalyst’s office. This phrase is remarkable. Credit is given to what the patient says and feels. So one has to believe her or him, in a practice of transference and countertransference—notwithstanding the color of his or her skin, or his or her religion, where feelings and dreams can be shared with the man who went so deeply into the painful analysis of his own experience, the man who wrote *Black Skin, White Masks*.

In Algeria, in the fifties, the fact of sharing feelings and dreams, trying to prevent people’s suffering, implied joining the revolution. That is the reason why Fanon meant so much for my generation. We were teenagers or very young people when the Algerian War of liberation started. It was a time of silence and of fear. Very little news came from Algeria. In Paris, Algerians were under threat. Most newspapers were published with large blanks, because of the heavy censorship. We tried to imagine what could have been written there. My parents had subscribed to the weekly newspaper *L’Express*, where I could read some very rare and rather discreet testimonies about what was unfolding. It was enough to suspect that a very dirty war was going on. In January 1958 Jérôme Lindon had the courage to publish *La question*, a short book written by Henri Alleg, a Jewish journalist, member of the Communist Party, and director of an Algerian newspaper, *Alger Républicain*. The word “question” has a double meaning: the question and also the torture, as the word “interrogation” has in English. Henri Alleg recounted how he had been put in jail and tortured by members of the French army who wanted to get information about other members of the party. After the first edition, the book was confiscated, as were the newspapers that mentioned it. But it was circulating covertly. I was beginning my studies in philosophy at the Sorbonne, and I can remember how eager we all were to get a copy and read it. One after the other our friends, our boyfriends, our husbands, left for Algeria to serve as soldiers, but in their letters or when they came back, they would not speak about what they saw or did. This silence still has heavy consequences for some French political and social orientations. Our demonstrations to ask for the end of this colonial war were severely repressed. But of course the main targets of that colonial violence were the Algerians.

Les damnés de la terre was published a few weeks after these terrible days of October 1961 when the dead bodies of Algerian people who engaged in a

peaceful demonstration were found in the River Seine. Until now nobody knows exactly how many were killed by the police. The first editions of the book were confiscated. But we all wanted to read it, and we did. At last we could put words to our fragmented experiences. I must confess that more than fifty years later, I still go on reading Fanon's works again and again. And each time I find something new to help me think further. The revolutionary hopes of the sixties and of the seventies have been dashed. But Fanon remains, because, as Lewis Gordon demonstrates it masterfully, there is something completely new and genuine in the way he writes and thinks, getting rid of all the ready-made discourse of the male Western-centered scholars. By letting us know what Fanon really said, Lewis Gordon opens for us a path leading to a definitive break with what he calls "disciplinary decadence," and to this "new skin," this "new way of thinking" for which Fanon, at the end of *Les damnés de la terre*, called.

Preface

The composition of this book on Frantz Fanon began in Providence, Rhode Island, during my years of teaching at Brown University. It was put on hold during a terrible decade of family tragedies and subsequent political battles with a set of academic administrators in Philadelphia, and then was reawakened in Toulouse, France, as I commenced my post as the European Union Visiting Chair in Philosophy there, and it was completed at the University of Connecticut at Storrs, where I now teach, with the added distinction of the Nelson Mandela Visiting Professorship at Rhodes University in South Africa and my continued collaboration with Toulouse. Such movement, marked by many proverbial trials and tribulations, is no doubt appropriate for a book on a thinker with whom my relationship began in my childhood when my Afro-Jewish-turned-Rastafarian maternal uncle Shaleem Solomon brought Fanon's books home. Thoughts of Black Liberation guided me through the years as some of Fanon's ideas subsequently made their way into my doctoral dissertation in 1993. The man embodying those ideas has been a kindred spirit, as I have taken on the task he counseled, namely, of at least two of the many missions of my generation: creating new concepts on which to base the future and articulating, as best I could, a better understanding of the past. I hope my efforts honor his name.

This work benefited from many supportive colleagues, friends, and family members over the years. I thank my interlocutors on Fanon and related topics: Lisa Anderson, Étienne Balibar, Myron Beasley, Janet Borgerson, Nahum Chandler, George Ciccariello-Maher, Garrick Cooper, Drucilla Cornell,

Danielle Davis, Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun, Mireille Fanon-Mendès-France, Ellen Feder, Nigel Gibson, Ramón Grosfoguel, Oscar Guardiola-Rivera, Leonard Harris, Paget Henry, Abdul JanMohamed, Vashna Jagarnath, Prafulla Kar, Teodros Kiros, Nikolas Kompridis, Rozena Maart, Jacqueline Martinez, Deivison Mendes Faustino, Walter Mignolo, P. Mabogo More, Marilyn Nissim-Sabat, Richard Pithouse, Alejandro De Oto, Lucius T. Outlaw, Wandia Njoya, Lyn Ossome, Jean-Paul Rocchi, Ricardo Sanín Restrepo, Renée White, Sylvia Wynter, and several of my former and present students: Imudia Norman Ajari, Vince Beaver, Ipek Sarac-Burnett, Tal Correm, Douglas Ficek, Greg Graham, Devon Johnson, Matthew Kos, Lior Levy, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Tom Meagher, Michael Monahan, Matthieu Renault, Neil Roberts, Rosemere Da Silva, Colena Sesanker, Eric Tucker, Wil Tucker, Chas Walker, and Ariella Werden-Greenfield. Additionally, there is the wonderful community of scholars around the Caribbean Philosophical Association, through which I have chaired the Frantz Fanon and the Nicolás Guillén awards for the past decade, and the various groups with which I have been active, such as the Philosophy Born of Struggle Society, Thinking Africa Group in Grahamstown, South Africa, the Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery in The Netherlands, the Forum on Contemporary Theory in Baroda, India, the Institute for Caribbean Thought in Mona, Jamaica, the Cave-Hill Institute for Philosophy in Barbados, my colleagues in the Erasmus Mundus and Philosophy Department at the University of Toulouse, France, and, of course, my gracious set of colleagues in the Philosophy Department, the Africana Studies Institute, Asian Studies, El Instituto, Judaic Studies, and the Humanities Institute at the University of Connecticut at Storrs.

Two sections of this book, from the third and fifth chapters, appeared in *The C. L. R. James Journal* and the French journal *Tumultes*. The article in the latter also appeared in English in Nigel Gibson's *Living Fanon*. The photographs in chapter 5 appear through Interuniversity Microelectronics Centre (IMEC) with the permission of Mireille Fanon-Mendès-France and Olivier Fanon, to whom I offer much appreciation.

I also extend special thanks to my late mother's best friend, my Aunt Lola, whose assistance to my family enabled me to spend a valuable period of time in France, during which I managed to compose the fourth and fifth chapters. To Mathieu, Jennifer, Luis, Sula, and Elijah, thanks for your patience during so many nights of writing and even more of editing. And

to my wife, Jane, to whom this book is dedicated: You joined me in life's journey going on two decades ago, and among the many things we share is inspiration from Fanon's thought. Beyond all that, however, is the reality that love, thought, and life are, as far as I am concerned, simply, you.

West Hartford, Connecticut

Raise the world with language empowered by the act.

—FRANTZ FANON

There is no freedom in silence.

—STEVE BANTU BIKO

“I Am from Martinique”

Before 1939, the Antillean said he was happy, or at least believed himself to be so. He voted, went to school when he could, took part in the processions, drank rum, and danced the beguine.

—FRANTZ FANON, “Antilleans and Africans”

Think of the body in motion. Dancing. Then think of it standing still. Perhaps leaned back. Consider the body in question or, perhaps, indifferent. Fanon’s body, a troubled, frenetic body that was simultaneously elegant, rhythmic (he did, in spite of his protestations, dance the beguine), and beautiful, is a subtext of all his writings. It gropes at reality, shivers, and quakes. It is at times frozen, often hot with anger while constrained by reflection and realization; a black surface; prodigious; handsome; dangerous, prurient, lustful; strong one moment, lame another; funny, yet often also sad; and, above all—searching.

The body is the man, and the man his body. Anxiety over embodiment is a dimension of Western civilization against which Fanon was in constant battle. The body, he laments, is a denied presence, and black people are a denied people. Writings of a black man, Fanon’s reflections carry an urgency born of intimacy. He and the alienated subjects of his books—denied, often, even of subjectivity—are both body and body denied.

Frantz Omar Fanon, this denied body through being too much body, was born on the 20th of July 1925 in Fort de France, Martinique. Malcolm Little, who then became Malcolm X and eventually El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, the famed black revolutionary thinker in the United States, was born two months earlier. So, too, was Patrice Lumumba, the martyred father of the Congolese Revolution, as well as the revolutionary Nicaraguan Catholic priest and poet Ernesto Cardenal. If creativity were like wine, one could argue that 1925 was a vintage year.

Frantz's father, Félix Casimir Fanon, was a customs agent, and his mother, Eléanore Médélice, was a shopkeeper. They were able to provide a lower-middle-class existence for their eight children—four boys and four girls, two of whom died in childhood. His mother, by virtue of race obsession on the part of several commentators, is often distinguished by her biracial status as a woman of a black Martinican mother and a white Alsatian father. His father was the son of a freed black slave and an East Indian woman. Fanon was the youngest of four sons in this once symmetrical family of ten.

One's biography is a story of wonder if it is occasioned by fame or an allegory of infamy. For the former, each childhood incident tags the hero with heroic qualities: An otherwise banal childhood becomes marked by prophecies of greatness. For the latter, the tragic stage is set, through which prophecy also portends doom. Fanon's life was such that both readings could apply. As a testament of a great revolutionary, it could easily be read on a level of biblical proportions. There is, for instance, the incident recounted by his brother Félix, where a childhood friend Clébert (then about fourteen years of age) had visited the Fanon household with his father's revolver to impress the Fanon brothers. Unaware that the gun was loaded, Clébert fired the gun, hurting his index finger and nearly shooting Frantz. The younger boy Frantz calmly tore a sheet, wrapped Clébert's injured finger, and explained to his mother that the noise was a toy backfiring and that they had decided to take a walk. He then took Clébert to the hospital. Such an incident could be interpreted as marking the "nature" of the future physician and revolutionary, a man who will remain cool in dire circumstances, a man who would find himself training guerrillas in an Algerian hospital basement, despite his philosophical aversion to notions of human "nature" and his moral detestation of violence.

There are, as well, those who despise what Fanon represents. They interpret, as we find in the work of Albert Memmi, early Françoise Vergès, later Stuart Hall, Isaac Julien, and Henry Louis Gates Jr., the unfortunate

influence of a very troubled man, a man plagued by self-hatred, fear of miscegenation, and Oedipal anxieties.¹ For some, Fanon's relationship with his mother and her father's whiteness are central. Did Fanon dream of possessing little white girls while a child and wish, given his critical letters to his father while at war—"Papa, you were sometimes remiss in your duty as a father"—that his father had been white?² Did Fanon leave Martinique for Dominica to train for the French Resistance during his brother's wedding to upstage his brother? Was it an act of aggression from a narcissistic scene-stealer?

I will not pretend. I consider such readings of Fanon's life to be highly problematic. They often fail to address the complexity of human failings and triumphs, as well as the political and historical contexts of the subject's life. As a human being, Fanon was both heroic and flawed. The combination was expressed in the ways he negotiated his historical situation as a member of a society marked by radical inequalities. Fanon lived in a colonial world, and racial hierarchy was a reality of that world. The Martinique of his day was dominated by the *Békés*, the approximately 1,000 whites who controlled the political and economic realities, that is, three-fourths of the land and business, of that island of nearly 300,000 blacks and, as some prefer, mulattoes, which that small minority of whites controls to this day. Readings of Fanon simply as a troubled man prioritize the psychological over any other model of human study. Interesting though Fanon's relationships with his parents may have been, and curious though one may be about his sex life, the fact remains that it is not Fanon's biography that brings us to his writings and political accomplishments but his writings and political accomplishments that bring us to his biography. Thus, even the model of the charismatic revolutionary is of value, in the end, to the theorist of political charisma. From the standpoints of many approaches, whether political, economic, psychoanalytical, or sociological, seemingly valid interpretations of Fanon's life could be fallaciously written. What many of his critics fail to realize is that intelligent and strong though Fanon was, his impact on his fellow human beings would be without effect if it were not also for his sense of humor and passion. The elevation of some interpretations to levels of *the best interpretation of his life* hides the man, and this is so because, in the end, the man could never be completely revealed, although he could, to a great extent, be understood.

Fanon's biography is, among its many manifestations, a political tale of pedagogical and moral value with ethical challenges. It is so because its en-

gement teaches us much about how emancipatory projects succeed and fail, and beseeching many of us to be like him would, in the end, demand for many of us to be better than we are. Each stage of his life was decisive in a historically consequential way. Hitler took Paris when Fanon was fifteen and set up the Marshal Pétain–led Vichy government as a puppet for Nazi Germany to rule France and its colonies. This led to several thousand French soldiers and sailors occupying Martinique and unleashing on the local population heavy doses of antiblack racism. These events awakened many Martinicans for a time from their racial naïveté and political slumber. Before that encounter, Martinicans imagined themselves to be a privileged group within the French colonial hierarchy. They regarded themselves as French, not black or African, and expected, if not to be treated as whites, to be acknowledged, at least, to be better than other “real” blacks, especially sub-Saharan Africans. In his essay “Antilleans and Africans,” Fanon describes this period in Martinican history as politically transformative.³ It was marked not only by the historical weight of World War II but also by the poetic philosophical challenge of Aimé Césaire, the famed Martinican poet and statesman, who brought to the island, as Moses did on clay tablets to the Israelites, prescriptions with promises of a Promised Land to a formerly enslaved population: Black was not only beautiful, he declared, but the heart of such darkness—Africa—was also its majestic center at which aesthetic and spiritual emancipation awaits.⁴ The ugly behavior of the white occupiers subverted white authority and called for Martinicans to imagine the impossible: fighting evil in white face. Were Germans and Frenchmen *more* than continental cousins?

For many Martinicans deeply invested in French identity, the idea of white Frenchmen identifying more with white Germans than Frenchmen of color was unthinkable, which made reality nothing short of traumatic. Others were, however, skeptical throughout. Some of Fanon’s countrymen regarded World War II as a European in-house affair. According to his brother Joby, Fanon’s response, one that remained with him to his dying day, was resolute: “Each time that liberty is affected, be we whites, blacks, yellows, or kakos . . . I swear to you today that no matter where it may be, each time that Freedom is threatened, I’ll be there.”⁵ Frantz escaped to the neighboring island of Dominica, where he trained for six months and returned to Martinique. He was then recruited into Battalion 5, a coalition of troops from Guadeloupe, Guyana, and Martinique, to fight against Germany during a recruitment drive that took him to Algeria.⁶

Fanon's service in World War II was a rude awakening. Each triumph was tainted by racial indignity. On the ship that took him to North Africa to fight for France, he and his fellow Martinican soldiers received racial insults of varieties that included the degradation of the Martinican Women's Corps being made into concubines of the white officers. In spite of their efforts to differentiate themselves from the much-despised black soldiers from other regions—which included wearing a special beret—the Martinican divisions found themselves treated as badly as those other blacks. The old joke about a black surgeon applied to them: "What do you call a black surgeon? Answer: *Nigger*." According to his good friend Marcel Manville, as related by Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, "The French subjected us with everyday humiliation in the ranks. Even if we wore the berets, the lesser ranked officers of the French army who were Cretans, imbeciles, and fossils . . . *tu-tued* us [addressed us informally in the diminutive] as if we were Senegalese and, for us, to be addressed in such a way was humiliating."⁷ *Tu* is the second-person familiar pronoun used by the French to designate intimate acquaintance or lower status (as in an adult addressing a child) as opposed to the respectful form *vous*. The equivalent is the Anglo use of "boy" or "girl" to address black men and women, which, in effect, is to assert that they are not men and women.

In Europe, the black soldiers found themselves mistreated not only by the white soldiers alongside whom they fought, but also by the whites they liberated from village to village, town to town. At celebration dances of emancipation, many white female celebrants preferred to dance with Italian (fascist) prisoners than the black soldiers who had shed blood and risked their own lives to liberate them. Dear France did not behave significantly better. The black heroes were sent back to Martinique ahead of the white soldiers on the *San Mateo*, a cargo ship, with short rations, to a return without the fanfare afforded their white counterparts.⁸

Fanon's political sensibilities before the Second World War, although patriotic and at times humanistic verging on sentimental and zealous, were no more nor less radical than those of his colleagues, which, for the most part, reflected French liberalism with an awareness of Marxism as its primary challenge. France's Communist Party enjoyed considerably more influence than other Western European Communist parties in the twentieth century; it thus played a role in national politics that presented communism as a live option. In the colonies, political affiliations were complicated by the impact of race. One could be *economically* radical but *racially* conservative. Césaire

was among those few who converged radically on both counts in the 1930s and 1940s. Fanon recounted in "Antilleans and Africans," for instance, that Césaire's racial radicalism was initially mocked, and for Martinique's fledgling petit-bourgeois black population—who, because of their education and Martinican status in the prewar racial hierarchy, expected economic rewards as civil servants of French colonialism—Césaire's radicalism, albeit aesthetically rooted in surrealism, was not welcomed. What is certain, however, is that after his return to Martinique, Fanon publicly allied himself with Césairean politics by working with his brother Joby in the mayoral election campaign for Césaire, who ran as a Communist candidate. Césaire was elected mayor of Fort-de-France in 1945.

Despite his growing involvement in radical politics and admiration for the literary power of Césaire's writings, interests that suggested work in politics, poetry, and drama, Fanon opted for a scholarship for World War II veterans, no doubt certain also because of his valor (he was twice wounded during the war), which enabled him to go to Paris to study dentistry.

Yes, Fanon at first sought the path of becoming a dentist. A revolutionary *dentist*? One could imagine the many awful puns and plays on words that would have emerged—from grabbing the "jaws" of history to getting to the "root" of oppression—had he not changed course. He went to Paris with his sister Gabrielle, who chose to study to become a pharmacist. In a short time, however, Fanon left Paris for Lyon, where he took preparatory courses in the natural sciences, studied philosophy, and earned admission to the school of medicine at the university there. Fanon's biographers appealed to boredom and disgust with the Parisian black population as reasons for his transfer. Perhaps. It is significant, however, that Fanon's medical training focused on psychiatry and forensics instead of, say, internal or general medicine. In psychiatry, Fanon found a convergence of the natural and human sciences that appealed to his multiple interests, and forensics tapped into his penchant for investigation.

While studying for his medical degree, Fanon attended lectures by the philosopher Jean Lacroix, a proponent of personalism, who argued for the human being overcoming schisms between social essences and idealistic conceptions of individual inner life devoid of social being, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the famed philosopher who was teaching at Lyon before achieving his venerable post at the Collège de France. Fanon also wrote three plays, *Les mains parallèles* ("Parallel Hands"), *L'oeil se noie* ("The Eye Falts," though more literally, "The Drowning Eye"), and *La conspiration*

("The Conspiracy"), none of which, at his request, was published after his lifetime, edited a journal, *Tam-Tam*, and participated in various left-wing political groups attracted to Lyon because of its reputation as a hotbed of radical politics.⁹

The period of study in France was marked by three important personal events. Its dawn was troubled by his father's death in 1947. Shortly afterward, Fanon had a brief romantic affair with a Russian Jewish woman whom he met in his philosophy class, which resulted in the birth of his daughter, Mireille, in 1948.¹⁰ Now Mireille Fanon-Mendès-France, she is a former *lycée* professor, with doctorates in classical literature and semiotics, a political activist, and president of the Fondation Frantz Fanon (Frantz Fanon Foundation).¹¹ Fanon had also a relationship with Marie-Josèphe Dublé ("Josie"), a French woman of Corsican and Gypsy descent, who shared his political and literary interests. They married in 1952. Olivier, the only child from that marriage, was born in Algeria in 1955. He worked through to his retirement as an official at the Algerian Embassy in Paris.

Not much is written about Josie Fanon.¹² She was his partner in struggle and ideas. Fanon rarely wrote out his work, choosing instead to dictate it to a typist, which explains why his articles and books are often best read aloud. In most instances, that typist was Josie, who also coedited some of his published work.¹³ She was, then, in many respects the actual reader/listener/audience, the flesh-and-blood presence, to whom the texts were addressed and who, to some extent, haunts his writings as one among their many subtexts. Frantz and Josie's relationship was marked, as well, by the challenges not only of interracial marriage in a racially hostile world but also of a partnership in which one member was an extraordinarily handsome, passionate, charismatic, and intellectually gifted secularist. Although accounts are not documented, it is informally claimed among Fanon scholars that Fanon was not a monogamous man, and the demands of his professional and later political life were such that he spent much time away from his family.

The period in Lyon was also marked by the publication of a few essays, the most famous of which were "L'expérience vécu du Noir" ("The Lived Experience of the Black"), which appeared in the May 1951 issue of *Esprit*, and "Le syndrome nord Africain" ("The North African Syndrome"), which appeared in the same review in 1952.¹⁴ The second essay, which I will later discuss, came about through Fanon's initial interest in pursuing a degree in legal medicine under the supervision of Michel Colin, in addition to his work in psychiatry. The essay demonstrates Fanon's investigative skills,

especially in circumstances where the mystery is not physical but social. In the first essay, to which we will soon return, Fanon presents his complex struggle to develop what he calls "ontological resistance" to antiblack racism. His account relates the "explosion" of his identity as a Frenchman through an encounter with a little white boy's surprise and horror at seeing him on a train, his hopes and despair at the presentation of Négritude as a philosophical ideal in Léopold Senghor's famous 1948 collection of poetry by black Francophone poets, *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* ("Anthology of New Negro and Malagasy Poetry in the French Language"), and his disappointment at Jean-Paul Sartre's famous critical foreword.¹⁵ Discussions of Négritude—which was an effort to present a positive, revolutionary conception of black identity—and Sartre's foreword will come later.

The first *Esprit* essay was part of Fanon's premier book, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*), which he had proposed as his medical thesis under the title "Essai sur la désaliénation du Noir" ("Essay on the Disalienation of the Black"). It was rejected by his doctoral supervisor, Professor Jean Dechaume, who was a proponent of psychosurgery, so he quickly composed and submitted two weeks later a thesis on a neuropsychological disorder titled "Troubles mentaux et syndromes psychiatriques dans l'Hérédo-Dégénération-Spino-Cérébelleuse: Un cas de maladie de Friedreich avec délire de possession" ("Mental Illness and Psychiatric Syndromes in Hereditary Cerebral Spinal Degeneration: A Case Study of Friedreich Disease with Possession Delirium"), which he defended in 1951.¹⁶ As the subtitle states, Friedreich's disease is a genetic condition involving degeneration or thinning of the spinal cord. Although the title suggests acquiescence to the psychophysiological dictates of his adviser, Fanon in fact offered an element of his original thesis that would remain a foundation of his thought: Drawing on ideas from the anthropologist, philosopher, and sociologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Fanon argued that one should, as a psychiatrist, reach to the patient's humanity instead of the material nexus of effects or symptoms. Patrick Ehlen offers an excellent summary:

In the context of Fanon's developing theory of human psychology, his attention to Lévy-Bruhl's law of participation [the coexistence of logical and prelogical thought] reveals an early understanding of and sympathy for the patient's cultural worldview above and beyond any medical theory. The task of the psychiatrist, then, becomes not simply to interview

the patient and then thumb through a book to uncover the diagnosis and solution, but to make an effort to "reach" the patient through the patient's own symbols and belief systems. Rather than focusing on symptoms, the approach focuses on the patient, or even *beyond* the patient, as the psychiatrist struggles to uncover those cultural "participations" at work in the patient's psyche. Before subscribing to any doctrine, the task of the doctor is to learn the doctrine of the patient.¹⁷

Learning the doctrine of the patient is a task to which Fanon devoted the rest of his life through extending it, as we will see, to the environment in which the patient not only lives but also emerges as a patient. Completing his medical degree, Fanon was then free to return to his more complex study. He secured publication that same year for his originally proposed thesis in a fashion characteristic of his personality, as related by Alice Cherki:

On reading the manuscript, [one of the senior editors, Francis Jeanson] promptly wrote Fanon requesting a meeting. Both men recall that first encounter as a stormy affair: Jeanson recalls the tense and touchy young man who turned up at his office that day; he had barely started praising the work when Fanon cut him off with a "not bad for a Nigger!" Jeanson, both angered and hurt by Fanon's barb, wasted no time in showing Fanon the door, thereby gaining Fanon's immediate respect. After this disastrous first encounter, work on the manuscript progressed smoothly with Fanon agreeing to Jeanson's suggestion of *Peau noire, masques blancs* as the title for the book.¹⁸

The publication, reprint, and history of critical assessments of *Black Skin, White Masks* have been items of discussion and debate among Fanon scholars, particularly regarding questions over which of his writings should receive the most attention. Its availability in English, through the auspices of Grove Press in the United States in 1965 and Paladin in England in 1970, succeeded translations of his subsequent work. That translation had gone out of print in England by the late 1970s but was soon brought back into print in 1986 by Pluto Press with a controversial foreword by Homi Bhabha, the famed Lacanian literary postcolonial theorist. By the 1980s, the work ascended in postcolonial and cultural studies, primarily as the subject of criticisms regarding its lack of political correctness on gender and sexual orientation and mixed-racial identities. From Bhabha's Lacanian psychoanalytical reading of Fanon's writings to subsequent criticism by others, such

as the literary theorist Gwen Bergner, the novelist Maryse Condé, and the filmmaker Isaac Julien, there also followed a discussion of the usefulness of the text itself. The search for postcoloniality may require more than *Black Skin, White Masks* offers. Henry Louis Gates Jr. criticized the critics for failing to see that Fanon was supposedly not a "global theorist," a theorist who could supply a "unified field theory" of oppression and postcoloniality. He counseled readers to concentrate on the biographical resources of the text. In response, Cedric Robinson criticized Gates for focusing on the supposedly "petit-bourgeois" *Black Skin, White Masks* in his essay.¹⁹ What is needed, he argued, is a Marxist-informed critique that reputedly emerges in Fanon's later work. More, Robinson castigated the contemporary postcolonial critics as ultimately anxious about what Fanon historically represents and, as in the case of, say, W. E. B. Du Bois, who seems, from the standpoint of contemporary scholarship, not to have lived past thirty-five, for preferring to focus on the young petit-bourgeois black doctor at this stage in his career and thought rather than on the mature revolutionary. They wanted, in other words, the man in a period of his life that most reflected their own condition and politics.

I joined the fray on two occasions. In the first, my *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*, I argued that Gates represented the tendency to privilege literary theory as theory in contemporary thought and Robinson represented the tendency of political thought to advance politics as the sine qua non of theory. Both positions I characterized as "disciplinarily decadent," where the theorists criticize other theorists for not focusing on the critic's discipline. Such positions, I argued, exemplified a failure to realize that Fanon's project was larger than such concerns. That is why his writings drew from so many sources; a radical critique was simultaneously metatheoretical and meta-critical—that is, self-critical and concerned with how the project of thought could be realized or how it could fail. In the second instance, I argued that Gates's position advanced an insidious fallacy: that Fanon (the black writer) offered, by virtue of his biography, "experience," which, in effect, left theory to white theorists. Literary and cultural critics often advance white philosophers such as Pierre Bourdieu, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault in literary and cultural theoretical studies of society without reservation and reduction to their European experiences and historical time, whereas many of Fanon's critics studied him as though he were trapped in his. The famed Luo philosopher D. A. Masolo, for instance, appealed to Fanon's remark, in the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks*, that he did

not come with "timeless truths," to mean that Fanon offers no ideas that transcended his time. Fanon was not, however, a reductive historicist. A relativistic reading of his remark is, therefore, problematic. Fanon was also not a philosophical idealist, a thinker who reduces reality to "ideas."

Here, we should bear in mind some of the contradictions of how great thinkers are read across racial lines. Foucault, for instance, read Marx as trapped in the nineteenth century, yet he built his ideas on Nietzsche's thought (which was in turn built on Hegel's contemporary, Arthur Schopenhauer). Why was Nietzsche a nineteenth-century writer who was able to speak to the later twentieth century but Marx supposedly not? In similar kind, why is Foucault, a contemporary of Fanon, appealed to at the end of the twentieth century and well into the twenty-first with less suspicion than Fanon? Cedric Robinson's criticism returns with ironic force: Marx and Fanon were revolutionaries and are thus held suspect at the end of a century that began with the call to revolution, became wary, and came to a close with antirevolutionary (if not counterrevolutionary) suspicion.²⁰ But without such a charge, the obvious criticism holds: A short treatise exploring the lived dynamics of antiblack racism and colonialism in the 1950s is, nevertheless, a twentieth-century text that should have some relevance for late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century thought on the human condition, if but for the fact that so-called "postracialism," a buzzword into the second decade of the twenty-first century, is little more than a way of referring to continued racism that is simply now ashamed of itself.

Many interpretations of *Black Skin, White Masks* have emerged since the turn of the millennium.²¹ Let us now turn, in the next chapter, to a close reading of what, in this inaugural work of his career, Fanon argued and, thus, said.

Writing through the Zone of Nonbeing

Fanon was an ironic writer who was struggling with the complex question of paradoxical reason and history. The modern collapse of “Reason” and “History” into all things European represented a *failure* of reason and history that required self-deception regarding Europe’s scope. Put differently: Europe sought to become ontological; it sought to become what dialecticians call “Absolute Being.” Such Being stood in the way of human being or a human way of being. It thus presented itself as a theodicy. Theodicy (from *theos*, meaning god, and *dikē*, meaning justice) is the branch of inquiry that attempts to account for the compatibility of an omnipotent, omniscient, and good god with injustice and evil. There are several formulations of the problem: If such a god has the power to do something about injustice and evil, why doesn’t the god do that? If that deity has created everything and is perfect, how could there be imperfect (often evil) beings? If the deity has foreknowledge, how could we continue to insist on the god’s goodness when the god had advanced knowledge of the consequences of the god’s creation? There have been many classical efforts to address this problem. The most

influential has been St. Augustine's insistence, in *The City of God*, that the deity's love for humanity required human freedom, and freedom requires the ability to do right or wrong. The problem does not emerge only in the Western tradition. Among the Akan of Ghana, for instance, the problem emerges as well, and solutions similar to St. Augustine's (and the modern philosopher Gottfried Leibniz's) have been posed by, for example, the Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye.¹ There, the Akan Supreme Being, Onyame, is supposed to be the force (*sunsum*) behind and through all Being. Is he, then, the source of evil as well? Oddly enough, theodicy does not disappear with modern secularism, as idolatrous treatment of states and even intellectual practices such as modern science attest. Whatever is advanced as a Supreme Being or Supreme Source of Legitimacy faces a similar critical challenge.

Rationalizations of Western thought often led to a theodicy of Western civilization and thought as systems that were complete and intrinsically legitimate in all aspects of human life, on levels of description (what is) and prescription (what ought to be), of being and value, while its incompleteness, its failure to be so, hallmarks of the "dark side of thought" lived by those constantly being crushed under its heels, remained a constant source of anxiety, often in the form of social denial.² People of color, particularly black people, live the contradictions of this self-deception continually through attempting to participate in this theodicy in good faith. This lived contradiction emerged because a demand often imposed upon people of color is that they accept the tenets of Western civilization and thought without being critical of them. Critical consciousness asks not only whether systems are consistently applied but also whether the systems themselves are compatible with other projects, especially humanistic ones. Take, for instance, rationality. Rationality emerges in many systems (especially modern liberalism) as free, say, of racist adulteration. What should we make, then, of racist rationality? An explosion erupts in the soul of a black person, one that splits the black person into two souls, as W. E. B. Du Bois observed in *The Souls of Black Folk* and the earlier "Conservation of the Races," with a consciousness of a frozen "outside," of a being as seen by others, in the face of the lived-experience from an "inside," from a being who is able to see that he or she is seen as a being without a point of view, which amounts to not being seen as a human being.³ Such interplay of ironic dimensions of sight and thought, of doubled doubling, are critical hallmarks of Fanon's thought.

Fanon begins *Black Skin, White Masks* by announcing a hypothetical "ex-

plosion” that is either “too soon” or “too late” (*Pn*, 5) and then confesses that there was a “fire” in him that has cooled sufficiently to address the “truths” at hand.⁴ He wasn’t kidding. His brother Joby recounts, in Isaac Julien’s film *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask* (1995), visiting him during his studies at Lyon. A faculty member described Fanon to Joby as “fireworks on the outside, fireworks on the inside!” This motif of fiery affect recurs in the book. Fanon recalls anger (fire) that had now become sober (cooled). Sobriety here does not mean an absence of heat. Throughout the work, Fanon struggles to hold the fire at bay, the result of which is an ongoing heat that occasionally bursts into flame. Cooled, he reflects sardonically on modern liberalism—equal rights and fraternity—and the many ways in which modern thinkers have attempted to address the so-called “black problem.” “Still,” he reflects, “a single line would be enough. Supply a single answer and the black problem loses its seriousness. What do blacks want?” (*Pn*, 6).⁵

The convergence of the “black problem” with desire (“want”) already marks a distinction in Fanon’s analysis. When Du Bois considered the so-called black problem half a century earlier, he argued against the question itself; it confuses, he argued, blacks with their problems.⁶ Blacks themselves are not the problem. The problem is the tendency to construct blacks as the problem, and whites produced that construction. Blacks’ seeing themselves to be “the problem” evokes a double consciousness of themselves through the eyes of those who despise them. Identifying the source of this construction leads to a new, critical perspective, which Paget Henry, building on Du Bois, calls “potentiated double consciousness.” It involves identifying the contradictions that made the first kind of double consciousness possible.⁷ By adding the dimension of what blacks want, Fanon raises and expands the question of the subjective life of blacks, of black consciousness, that parallels the Freudian question of women—What do women want?⁸ This question of want, of desire, is not as simple as it may at first seem, for the life of desire is prereflective and reflective. What one claims to want is not always what one actually wants. And what one actually wants could become discarded on reflection. That Fanon has raised the question of subjective life poses, as well, the split between lived reality and structure. An individual black’s desire may not comport with the structural notions of black desire. As Fanon cautions the reader, “Many *nègres* will not find themselves in what follows. This is equally true of many whites. But the fact that I feel a foreigner in the worlds of the schizophrenic or the sexual cripple in no way diminishes their

reality" (*Pn*, 9). He affirms this focus later on: "I am speaking here, on the one hand, of alienated (mystified) blacks, and, on the other, of no less alienated (mystifying and mystified) whites" (*Pn*, 23).

The French word *nègre* means "Negro" and "nigger" depending on the context. Persuaded by Ronald A. T. Judy's extraordinarily insightful essay on Fanon's nomenclature, I have decided to use that French word to retain the flavor of its ambiguity in Fanon's writings.⁹ In a way, the subtext of "Negro" is always the "nigger," who awaits his or her appearance. As well, to maintain the sense of Fanon's prose, I will also use "the black" and "the white" in places where he writes *le Noir* and *le Blanc*.¹⁰ Although the translators have often chosen the expression "the black man" and "the white man," Fanon's meaning is not often gendered except where he is specifically referring to women and men. So, I will do the same.

In his analysis, Fanon raises the schism between individual and structure by making an important distinction. The study of the black as a form of human study requires understanding what he calls *ontogenic* and *phylogenetic* approaches. Ontogenic approaches address the individual organism. Phylogenetic approaches address the species. The distinction pertains to the individual and structure. Fanon adds that such distinctions often miss a third factor—the *sociogenic*. The sociogenic pertains to what emerges from the social world, the intersubjective world of culture, history, language, and economics. In that world, he reminds us, it is the human being who brings such forces into existence. What does recognition of such a factor offer our understanding of "the black problem" and "what blacks want"?

The dehumanizing bridge between individual and structure posed by antiblack racism marks the black, who is, in the end, "anonymous" in a perverse way, which enables "the black" to collapse into "blacks." It is perverse because whereas "blacks" is not a proper name, antiblack racism makes it function as such, as a name of familiarity that closes off the need for further knowledge. Each black is, thus, ironically nameless by virtue of being *named* "black." This naming affords a strange intimacy, in which blacks are always *too* close, which stimulates anxiety for distance to the point of disappearance or absence. So blacks find themselves, Fanon announces at the outset, not structurally regarded as human beings. They are problematic beings, locked in what he calls "a zone of nonbeing."

What blacks want is not to be problematic beings; they want to escape from that zone. They want to be human in the face of a structure that denies their humanity. In effect, this "zone" can be read in two ways. It could be

limbo, which would place blacks below whites but above creatures whose lots are worse; or it could simply mean the point of total absence, the place farthest from the light that, in a theistic system, radiates reality, which would be hell. His claim that “in the majority of cases, the black lacks the benefit of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell (*Enfers*)” (*Pn*, 6) suggests the first reading. Yet this is more of a collapse than a fall because, as we will see, it places the black body into a schema of deviations and imitation. As deviation, it falls from a presumed original white body. Why doesn’t it *rise* from the white? As the standard, the white would make illegitimate the movement in any direction of deviation; whether up or down, the consequence is failure. The path, then, seems to be to overcome the deviation by reclaiming an original unity. The white, however, denies the original unity, because that would entail a potential blackness at the heart of whiteness, which makes the claimed reclamation imitation. As imitation, what is lacked is the original advantage of the self as standard. The imitation, in other words, is not its own standard. It becomes a failure even of its achievement. To achieve imitation is to fail at what an imitation imitates, namely, an original. We will return to this theme of failure shortly.

Fanon, however, has much in store for the reader. For even if the “majority” of blacks lack such an ability of descending into a true hell, it does not follow that in *this case*—namely, Fanon’s unfolding narrative—the descent into *Enfers* cannot be made. Such thoughts suggest that although the text has an epigraph from Aimé Césaire’s *Discours sur le colonialisme*, the suffering of which he speaks gains its poetic flavor from the mythopoetics of hell that have governed many writers in the Western world—namely, Dante Alighieri’s *Inferno*.¹¹ Support for this connection is that Fanon’s formal education was exclusively Western, and that the Martinique of his childhood was (and continues to be) predominantly Roman Catholic means that the grammar of normative life would take the poetic form of the church’s founding imagery despite Fanon’s existential atheism. The connection with Dante’s *Inferno* raises the question, however, of Fanon’s role in his text. Is Fanon Dante, the seeker threatened by sin (the “fire” he brought to truth), or Virgil, the (“cooled”) guide from Limbo? Or is he both? The social world is such that it is not simply a *formal* mediation of phylogeny and ontogeny. It also offers the content, the aesthetics, and the “lived” dimensions of mediation. Fanon our guide, then, plans to take us through the layers of mediation offered to the black. As such, he functions as Virgil guiding us through a world that many of us, being “imbeciles,” need but often refuse to see. So,

utilizing Fanon's observation of the sociogenic dimensions of this structural denial, the argument takes the following turn.

CONSTRUCTIVITY AND FAILURES OF RECOGNITION

There is a white construction called "the black." This construction is told that if he or she really is human, then he or she could go beyond the boundaries of race. The black can supposedly "really choose" to live otherwise as a form of social being that is not black and is not any racial form or designation. Racial constructions are leeches on all manifestations of human ways of living: language, sex, labor (material and aesthetic), socializing (reciprocal recognition), consciousness, and the "soul." *Black Skin, White Masks* thus describes a quasi-anonymous black hero's efforts to shake off these leeches and live an adult human existence. Each chapter represents options offered the black by modern Western thought. In good faith, then, the black hero attempts to live through each of these options simply as a human being. But the black soon discovers that to do so calls for living simply as a white. Anti-black racism presents whiteness as the "normal" mode of "humanness." So, the black reasons, if blackness and whiteness are constructed, perhaps the black could then live the white construction, which would reinforce the theme of constructivity. Each portrait is, however, a tale of how exercising this option leads to failure. And in fact, "failure" takes on a peculiar role in the work; it is the specialized sense in which Fanon is using the term "psychoanalysis": "If there can be no discussion on a philosophical level—that is, the plane of the basic needs of human reality—I am willing to work on the psychoanalytical level—in other words, the level of 'failures' [*ratés*], in the sense in which one speaks of engine failures" (*Pn*, 18). The French word that matches the ordinary English use of the word *failure*, where defeat or setback is meant, is *échec*. *Raté* more properly refers to a misfire, missing the mark, or something backfiring, as in an old combustion engine, which explains Fanon's reference to engine failures. The word is also used, however, to refer to not measuring up, of failing to meet a standard, as in the expression *raté de père*, a man failing to meet the expectations or standards of fatherhood, a concept rich with psychoanalytical content.¹² Fanon is thus referring to the frustration not only of missing the mark but also of the repercussions, which, inevitably, lead to therapy. That is why he says he is "willing to" work on the psychoanalytical level, for, as we will see, Fanon raises, as well, the question of whether the approach of failure is also a form of failure, which

further raises the question of whether such a psychoanalytical approach is exemplified or transcended because of ultimately not measuring up or failing to meet its own standard. There is thus a paradox of failure: To fail at it is to succeed; to miss the mark is to demonstrate the validity of rejecting it, and therefore affirming or achieving it.

The motif of failure raises, still more, the question of the *type* of text Fanon has composed and how he is situated in relation to it. What we find is that each failure is not necessarily Fanon's, for he is both the voice of the text (the black) and the voice about the text (the theorist and guide). Thus, although Fanon the quasi-anonymous hero of the text, the black, constantly fails (misses his mark), Fanon the critic of Western discourses of Man, Fanon the revolutionary theorist who demands systemic and systematic change, succeeds (by identification of each failure). Paradoxically, if the hero of the text wins (that is, achieves his aims), the hero of thought (the theorist) fails, and vice versa. Thus, after announcing in the introduction that ontogenic and phylogenic explanations fail and need to be mediated by sociogenic explanations premised on human agency, Fanon charts the course of the black with these theoretical "idols" of humanization. Like Friedrich Nietzsche, who sought to break the idols of (and, thus, idolatry in) Western civilization, Fanon hopes to destroy the idols that militate against the human spirit in an antiblack racist and colonial world.¹³

The transformative force of linguistic mastery is one such idol. Language is a construction that has the force of forming reality. Taking heed of Marx's counsel in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach—"Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it"—Fanon advances the godlike quality of this dictum through Paul Valéry's observation that language is "the god gone astray in the flesh."¹⁴ To transform language, then, is the godlike project of transforming reality. Living language is, however, embodied. Flesh and such language are, in other words, symbiotic. Fanon is here referring to the phenomenological view of body and flesh; they refer, as well, to consciousness, which, from an existential phenomenological perspective, is always embodied consciousness of things, including intersubjective consciousness or the social world. This is because consciousness requires a point of view, a perspective, which cannot be achieved, as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty showed, without a body.¹⁵ That language invests meaning in those who embody it means, then, that the transformation of language entails the transformation of language-users. The black, thus, takes it upon himself or herself to transform the world through a different language

of self-presentation. He or she attempts to live words that transcend, if not eradicate, blackness. The efforts are familiar: “I am not black, I am brown.” “I am not black, I am a mulatto.” “I am not black, I am biracial.” Or: “I am not black, I am myself.” “I am not black, I am Martinican.” “I am not black, I am French.” “I am not black, I am simply a human being.”

The result is tragicomic. Fanon recounts many instances of the black struggling to wear and thereby express nonblackness—the effort at ontological transformation by departure from colored colonies to living for a time in Paris, the French metropole (because in Paris, there are “real” French people, those at the center of the French world, so by becoming Parisian, one “really” becomes French), where the Reality Principle awaits; the struggle with the *r*-eating tongue, which Fanon describes as a “wretchedly lazy organ,” as in the case of the newly arrived Martinican who knows the stereotype—“*Je suis Martiniquais, c’est la première fois que je viens en France*” (“I am Martinican; it is my first time in France”)—has practiced rolling his *rs* to the point of yelling, “*Garrçon! Un vè de biè.*” (“Waiterrr! Bing me a beeya!”).¹⁶

Fanon recounts many admonitions from his childhood against speaking Creole and the advocacy of speaking “real French,” “French French,” that is, “white” French. The phenomenon is familiar in the Dutch-speaking, Anglophone, Lusophone, and Hispanophone Caribbean. In the Anglo Caribbean, one is admonished against speaking *patois* (the creolized mixture of West African and European languages) and encouraged to speak the “Queen’s English.” Such French, Dutch, English, and Spanish—and in other areas German, Portuguese, and Italian—offer words of whiteness.¹⁷ A critic may be quick to respond that there is an important class dimension to this observation, for certain ways of speaking the dominant language offer, as well, economic mobility. Fanon, however, has a powerful response.

The black’s effort at transformative linguistic performance is a comedy of errors; instead of being a transformer of words, the black is considered to be a “predator” of words, and even where the black has “mastered” the language, the black discovers in those cases that he or she becomes linguistically dangerous. Against the class critique, Fanon observes that the black never speaks whiteness as even working-class whites speak whiteness. Such whites speak whiteness “bookishly,” whereas people of color, especially blacks, speak whiteness “whitely” or “white-like.” Speaking whiteness white-like means that the black does not achieve the normative escape that he or she seeks but instead the limitation of what semiological poststructuralists call “semiotic play.” Semiotic play refers to the activity of taking seriousness

out of the use of signs and symbols of a language. Seriousness is absolute; it leaves no option. It collapses the world into “material values,” where there is supposedly no ambiguity.¹⁸ “White-like” and “whitely” signify imitation. The black, thus, becomes a masquerade, a black wearing a white linguistic mask. The tragedy, in this tragicomedy, is that such a mask signifies a monstrosity, a danger:

Nothing is more astonishing than to hear a black express himself properly, for then in truth he is putting on the white world. I have had occasion to talk with students of foreign origin. They speak French badly: Little Crusoe, alias Prospero, is at ease then. He explains, informs, interprets, helps them with their studies. (*Pn*, 30)

The reference to Crusoe and Prospero are, of course, to the allegory of their relation to Friday and Caliban. In both Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, the white interloper exercises dominion over the island native who seeks the powers of the interloper’s ways of knowing—in other words, language and science. The impact of this allegory on modern thought is tremendous, to the point of there now emerging “ways of knowing” that attempt to understand, if not alleviate, Friday’s and Caliban’s condition. Friday and Caliban, after all, had ways of knowing that preceded Crusoe’s and Prospero’s conquest of their islands. From such a perspective, the study of European civilizations becomes “Crusoe or Prospero studies,” and the effort to understand Friday’s and Caliban’s situation (which incorporates their knowledge of Crusoe and Prospero), becomes “Friday or Caliban studies.” Fanon’s description of the danger is Calibanist: Prospero (the white) is safe so long as Caliban (the black, or perhaps more on the mark, the “*nègre*”) struggles with instead of “masters” the language of mastery.¹⁹ It is a double standard that is demanded: Blacks are human if they can speak white, but if they can speak white, they are dangerous; therefore, they must be reminded of their limitation: “Yes, the black is supposed to be a good *nègre* [*bon nègre*]. . . . And naturally, just as a Jew who spends money without thinking about it is suspect, a black who quotes Montesquieu had better be watched.” More: “When a *nègre* talks of Marx, the first reaction is always the same: ‘We have brought you up to our level and now you turn against your benefactors. Ingrates! Obviously nothing can be expected of you.’ And then too there is that bludgeoned argument of the plantation-owner in Africa: Our enemy is the teacher” (both quotes from *Pn*, 27–28).²⁰ He then further invokes Prospero’s point of view through an excerpt from Dr. Michel

Salomon's *Présence Africaine* article, "D'un juif à des nègres" ("From a Jew to Nègres"), which he cites in note 9 of that chapter. Writes Salmon, as quoted by Fanon:

I knew some *nègres* in the school of Medicine. . . . In a word, they were a disappointment; the color of their skin should have permitted them to give *us* the opportunity to be charitable, generous [*magnanimes*], or scientifically friendly. They were derelict in this duty, this claim on our good will. We were left with our sniveling tenderness, with our cunning concern. We had no *nègres* to patronize, nor did we have anything to hate them for; they counted for virtually as much as we in the scale of the little jobs and petty chicaneries of daily life.

The black finds no direction that offers refuge here. Colored discourses represent a "lowering." To demand that whites speak to blacks with *that* discourse signifies condescension. To speak to whites in *their* language represents imitation and usurpation. The recourse of both colored and white reality is often the same to such a black: "You had better stay in your place" (*Pn*, 26).

There is, as well, for some whites who may have transcended fear, the moment of marvel in the face of blacks who have mastered the dominant language. Fanon cites André Breton's introduction to Aimé Césaire's classic poetic anticolonial work, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, where Breton declared: "And here is a black who handles the French language as no white today has"; to which Fanon replies: "I do not see why there should be any paradox, anything to outline, for in truth M. Aimé Césaire is a native of Martinique and a university graduate" (*Pn* 31). The black television reporter who speaks as white reporters speak, the black attorney who speaks as other attorneys speak, the black medical doctor who speaks as white medical doctors speak, the black university professor who speaks as other university professors speak, the black president or prime minister who speaks as other presidents and prime ministers speak, and so on—why does these professionals' *speech* often surprise, and at times shock and frighten, other times arouse, those who hear them?

The promise of language is not only seductive but also unfaithful. Semiotic resistance, albeit important—Fanon, after all, admonishes the use of condescending language—at times intensifies the problem instead of alleviating it. Mastering the language for the sake of recognition *as white* reflects a dependency that subordinates the black's humanity. As Chester

Fontenot succinctly summarizes this conclusion: “The Blacks unwittingly place themselves in an inferior, compromising position to that of the whites. The Blacks’ attempts to assert themselves against the colonialists serve to imply that they seek recognition from the colonialists, and are, therefore, relegated to an inferior status.”²¹ To its credit, however, the intensification of the semiotic problem brings the importance of language into focus. A significance of language is its inherent publicity. Failing a public retreat, the black may now move inward, to the private sphere, to the sexual sphere, for sanctuary.

“PLEASE, BE MY MIRROR”

Fanon’s discussion of psychosexual retreat has received much criticism. It has been the basis of accusations of his being misogynous because of his discussion of women of color and especially his criticisms of Mayotte Capécia’s autobiographical novel *Je suis Martiniquaise*, winner of the Grand Prix Littéraire des Antilles in 1949, and her follow-up novel, *La nègresse blanche*.²² The first is ordinarily translated as *I Am Martinican*, but the “e” on the end signifies the author’s gender, which renders the translation literally as *I Am Martinican Woman*. To smooth the English, one could add an article, rendering it as *I Am a Martinican Woman*. There is much ambiguity here, however, for the author stands as more than “a” Martinican woman, given the way texts by black authors are read. She stands as “Martinican woman” or worse—“the Martinican woman.” The second book’s title is straightforward, given her use of the definite article “la”: *The White Negress*. The back-and-forth in the critical literature on Fanon’s treatment of Capécia’s first book has been such that one commentator, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, wrote an account and criticism of how the debate has spilled over into a debate on Fanon and feminism.²³ I have often wondered if many of the critics actually *read* what Fanon said instead of commentaries on what he is reputed to have said. That being so, I should like to state here that there are flaws in arguments that expect symmetry in analyses focused on the absence of symmetry, and it is unclear to me how Fanon is expected to have written on the two main accounts of women of color, Capécia’s and A. Sadjji’s, without the criticisms he has offered as part of his ongoing argument.²⁴

Fanon announced that he was examining pathological cases, those of the phobic and of failure. Throughout the text, I do not see black (especially Martinican) men faring particularly well either. They are tragicomic

seekers of recognition, full-of-themselves visitors in Paris who return to the Antilles to be “deified,” deluded foragers of civilization in a pair of “white breasts,” pathetic slaves in search of whiteness through, if not white women, at least mulattas who condescendingly offer a bit of whiteness, and so on. Added to this treatment is Fanon’s relationship with his father. The relationship is the stuff of which drama could be made; as we have seen, his hostility to the man was such that it seemed at best insensitive, if not cruel. Fanon acted as though he only had a mother, especially during his years in North Africa and Southern Europe during World War II, as we saw in this correspondence on the eve of a dangerous mission, the rest of which I will here quote:

Papa, you were sometimes remiss in your duty as a father. If I allow myself to so judge you, it’s because I am no longer of this life. These are the reproaches of one from the Beyond. Mama was sometimes made unhappy because of you. She was already unhappy because of us. . . . If we, your eight children, have become something, it’s Mama alone who must be given the glory. . . . I can see the expression you’ll make in reading these lines, but it’s the truth. Look at yourself, look at all the years gone by; bare your soul and have the courage to say, “I deserted them.” Okay, repentant churchgoer, come back to the fold.²⁵

He states repeatedly in *Black Skin, White Masks* that the black is not a man, and he mentions, as we have seen, seeking his virility, his manhood, in his lover. Although he is speaking figuratively—as something that people generally do—he is also speaking autobiographically. Fanon’s behavior makes sense if we take heed of his growing up in a colonized Caribbean. The biographical and critical literature on Fanon is almost entirely devoted to the French influences on Martinican society, influences that are clearly patriarchal. Fanon reminds us that “the patriarchal European family with its flaws, its failures, its vices, closely linked to the society that we know, produces about 30 per cent neurotics” (*Pn*, 39). This is one of the outcomes of the insight, which Fanon erroneously attributes to Nietzsche, that (in Fanon’s paraphrasing) “Man’s misery (*le malheur*) is that he was once a child” (*Pn*, 8). The actual source was Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947), a text that, along with *The Second Sex* (1949), as Matthieu Renault informs us, reveals affinities between Beauvoir and Fanon.²⁶ Beauvoir offers this formulation in two places. The first is in reference to Descartes’s observation of infinite freedom in the face of limited power: “Man’s misery, said Descartes,

comes from having been born a child."²⁷ The second is elaborated in terms of her own argument: "Man's misery comes from his having been a child because his freedom was initially masked leaving him nostalgic for the time when he was ignorant of its exigencies."²⁸ Although at first an observation on the human condition, Beauvoir subsequently brought it to bear on specific modes of embodiment, identities, and the longing human beings may have for times before such ways of being were realized. Her observation in *The Second Sex* of not being born but instead becoming a woman is premised on this insight and clearly prefigures Fanon's thesis of the black as a white construction, that blacks are *made* or constructed. As Beauvoir scholarship reveals Jean-Paul Sartre's indebtedness to her for crucial concepts such as the Look and discussions of concrete relations with others in *Being and Nothingness*, it is clear that Fanon, too, is influenced by her thought on at least the philosophical anthropology of human development, the limitations of Hegelian dialectics of recognition, and the importance of psychoanalysis in his inaugural work.²⁹ Beauvoir and Fanon argue that gender and racialization raise problems of a social condition that impedes human development: Man's unfortunate nostalgia for childhood makes sense where adulthood is realizable. But what is there to do in a world that offers nothing beyond imposed childhood? As women are not men, what are the consequences of some men being a standard by which other males are denied manhood? How do those latter men relate to women?

Returning to the European patriarchal family as the model, what many Martinicans, and other Caribbean peoples, tried desperately to shed was their African lineage, an identity marked by ascriptions of "primitivism" (humanity's childhood). Beyond this distorted conception of their African ancestry there is also a dimension marked by cultural retentions of a majority African-descended population, one that structures property, for instance, matrilineally. The result, often, is that the household, and even home ownership, tends to be female-centered. If the colonial values were not imposed as "real" values over the African and (in other regions) indigenous ones, this situation would simply be one of living two sets of values. A matrilineal household would not be a "defect." But where culturally mixed communities *privilege* patriarchal values, the result is catastrophic. Fanon's father was a customs official who was at times employed and at other times working through the family shop, but Fanon felt, as no doubt many black sons did, that their fathers held no power against white men, however few in number those white men were. Fanon shows evidence of having been ashamed of his

father because he felt that his father wasn't a man and therefore not properly a father; he regarded his father, in other words, as a *raté de père*. The result was that Fanon himself was ever on guard for masculine demotion. There is a famous footnote, to which we will later turn, where he denies the existence of the Oedipus complex in Martinique. He was both right and wrong. He was right in the sense that a structural White Man hovered over black male reality. But he was wrong in his own existential situation, for he longed for the replacement of his own father. This longing emerged in a world where the manhood of colored males is always called into question. In such a society, a male of color is manly to the extent that he is useful, but with an economy that renders him little more, often less, useful than the female inhabitants to a colonizing force that infantilizes and exploits them both, such gender questioning is incessant. It has been the case everywhere where there is racism.³⁰ In the end, then, Fanon was neither misogynist nor homophobic (as we will later see) but instead a man who hated the role laid out for him as a black male. He recounts the role of the hero offered to white boys and that of the villain and savage offered to black ones in comic books, where the heteronormative presumption for girls (of all races) is the path of white men rescuing them from black and other men of color (*Pn*, 120).³¹ If the black male was not—indeed, *could not be*—a man, and Fanon was a black male, then he, too, was presumably not, and could not be, a man. Fanon aimed to be a man, which, under such a schema, appeared like Sartre's formulation of man's useless passion of becoming a deity.³²

I cannot, however, excuse Fanon's failure to articulate his indebtedness to Beauvoir. Although he acknowledges the psychoanalytical contributions of Anna Freud, the existential philosophical domains appear squarely in the hands of men such as Jaspers and Sartre when it is clear that Beauvoir not only offered much intellectual sustenance for Fanon's thought but also that he was well aware of at least two of her major contributions at the time of writing *Black Skin, White Masks*, as the presence of these books in his home library attest.³³ Beauvoir's contributions to philosophy and especially the area of human sciences were by that point monumental, though controversial. Controversy is not a challenge of which Fanon was afraid, which makes her presence at the level of ideas but exclusion at that of citation a form of epistemic sexism. There is, however, an additional twist in this genealogy of thought. Beauvoir, after all, admitted the influence Richard Wright had on her thought, especially regarding ideas ranging from double consciousness to her treatment of the lived-experience of women and racialized subjects in

The Second Sex.³⁴ Wright also influenced Sartre's thought in a similar way, as Ronald Hayman reports in *Sartre: A Life*:

The black American writer Richard Wright had told him: "There is no Negro problem in the United States, there is only a white problem." In France, Sartre declared, there was no Jewish problem, only a problem of anti-Semitism. It is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew; the question to ask was not "What is a Jew?" but "What have you made the Jews into?"³⁵

This circle of thought reveals an evolving community of ideas in which each participant influences the other, through which to draw on resources of one is to evoke the other. There is, in other words, a fundamental relationality of ideas through which speaking of race in terms of gender reveals a symbiosis of each. Acknowledging Beauvoir means, in other words, also evoking Wright, and reading through Fanon should, then, bring forth Beauvoir and the many exemplars of existential critical work on oppression. So why is she absent at the level of citation in this work on which she had clear influence? That Beauvoir, Fanon, Sartre, and Wright, each of whom came to know each other, are all dead, and that Josie Fanon, who participated in the composition of this work, has also passed leaves much of this matter to speculation.

I return, then, to Fanon's discussion of the challenges of studying the meeting of gender and race: The question is about the ultimate purpose of his analysis. Capécia, as at least characterized in the imaginative resources of her text, desperately wanted to be something more than a woman. She wanted to be white. She already *knew* that she was a woman, but as a woman of color, she was locked on a scale of desire that sought, above all, something she lacked. She did not only desire whiteness, but she desired to be desired, and since she considered whiteness to be most desirable, that is what she most desired. Both Fanon and Capécia represented a failure, but his failure will manifest itself throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*. His goal in chapters 2 and 3, in particular, is to explore failure of a special kind, that which emerges from the retreat from the public sphere of language to the supposed private sphere of sexual intimacy. To understand Fanon's analysis of such a retreat, we need, at first, to understand the Lacanian psychoanalytical dimensions of his argument.

Jacques Lacan, the famed semiological psychoanalyst, presented several important discussions of the impact of language on the Oedipus complex.³⁶

For Lacan, the Father as symbol made legitimacy also part of a symbolic order. “Woman” has a problematic existence in the symbolic order, which is patriarchal, positioned by the Father and, more mundanely, fathers. Power is here phallic, and “woman” differs from and *defers to*, so to speak, that order. As with classical psychoanalysis, where women embody castration anxiety (the “absence” of a penis), Lacanian psychoanalysis articulates women as lack or difference or, if we will, failure. Willy Apollon, the famed Haitian Lacanian psychoanalyst, has observed that many women experience this lack, which, he noticed, led to a recurring theme of desire in his psychotic female patients—the desire for a certain type of love. What they desired, he argued, was “a certain quality of love—more precisely, words of love, certain words addressed to them as subject.”³⁷ For those patients, the father or someone who functioned as such was the only one from whom such words had worth. Such men, or at least what they symbolized, had power, literally, to give those women what they wanted or, generalized across time, what they want.

Let us call this phenomenon “words of love.” Love offers recognition that is also legitimating. When one is loved, one receives judgment from another regarding one’s existence. The lover bestows a judgment on the world that the beloved *should* exist. That is why the lover finds the thought of the beloved’s death unbearable, and it is why, as Kierkegaard and many others have observed, love also continues for loved ones who have passed away; the love is the continued judgment that the beloved deceased ought never to cease existing. Lovers “see” their beloved differently than do others. The lover celebrates the perfections and imperfections of the beloved; features that may otherwise seem unattractive take on the veneer of wonder; the beloved’s uniqueness is verified by such features and confirms the beloved’s irreplaceability.³⁸ In Fanon’s words, “The person I love will strengthen me by endorsing my assumption of my virility, while the need to earn the admiration or the love of others will erect a value-making superstructure on my whole vision of the world . . . [;] authentic love—wishing for others what one postulates for oneself, when the postulation unites the permanent values of human reality—entails the mobilization of psychic drives basically freed of unconscious conflicts” (*Pn*, 33).

Fanon’s treatment of the impact of alienated love on women of color anticipated Toni Morrison’s observation in *The Bluest Eye*: “The best hiding place was love. Thus the conversion from pristine sadism to fabricated hatred, to fraudulent love. It was a small step to Shirley Temple. I learned much

later to worship her, just as I learned to delight in cleanliness, knowing, even as I learned, that the change was adjustment without improvement.”³⁹ What is the impact of antiblack racism on love, where one seeks in the eyes of one’s lover and from the words that flow from her or his mouth a form of justification of one’s existence? Fanon and Morrison demonstrate a special failure here, a failure to escape the social reality principle of antiblackness through a loving whiteness. Fanon’s position is not that interracial relationships must be pathological efforts to escape blackness. His argument is that where whiteness is the basis of the liaison, the effort is pathological and hence a form of failure.

Fanon’s decision to analyze *Je suis Martiniquaise* and Sadjí’s *Nini* is based on two criteria: the accolades of the first book and the insights both works bring into the subordinated relations of black women and mulattas in an antiblack society. Here is how Fanon introduces *Je suis Martiniquaise*:

For after all we have a right to be concerned when we read, in *Je suis Martiniquaise*: “I should have liked to be married, but to a white man. But a woman of color is never altogether respectable in a white man’s eyes. Even when he loves her. I knew that.” This passage, which serves in a way as the conclusion of a vast delusion, prods one’s brain. 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. For me, all circumlocution is impossible: *Je suis Martiniquaise* is cut-rate merchandise, a sermon in praise of corruption. (*Pn*, 34)⁴⁰

T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting provides information on the “enthusiastic reception that greeted this book in certain circles.” She writes on page 36 of her influential study:

In 1949, Mayotte Capécia would become the fourth Antillean and the first black woman to be awarded the renowned *Grand Prix Littéraire des Antilles* for *Je suis martiniquaise* (1948). The annual award, paying the handsome sum of 20,000 francs, was established in 1946 in Paris for novels, historical novels, essays, and poetry. Interestingly, the jury who found Capécia’s work worthy of recognition was composed of thirteen Frenchmen. The autobiographical novel was hardly seen as a *chef d’oeuvre* among the writers of the *négritude* movement, nor did it

ever gloss the pages reserved for literary criticism and book reviews in *Présence Africaine*. And the authenticity, i.e., Capécia's authorship, of the book has recently come under scrutiny. Notwithstanding Maryse Condé's bibliography of Francophone Antillean women writers in *paroles de femmes*, Capécia's work is not mentioned in Patrick Chamoiseau's and Raphaël Confiant's historical-literary tour de force on writings by Antilleans, *Lettres créoles: Tracées antillaises et continentales de la littérature 1635–1975*. One could certainly argue that the marginalization of black women writers by black male literati is not surprising and even that it is indicative of persistent attempts to privilege male voices and silence women's candid articulation of their experiences. However, such a statement would be in haste, for the monthly 1940s–50s issues of *Présence Africaine* include scores of writings by black and white women, and *Lettres créoles* does in fact have a cadre of Antillean women writers, including Maryse Condé, Simone Schwarz-Bart, and Suzanne Césaire.⁴¹

The endorsement of the work, then, offered insight into what an influential group of white French men wanted to read, which provides the same into the “white construction” of Fanon's study (cf. *Pn*, 6). But more, even with the realities of a market dictated by a white French reading public, there is room for understanding the portrayal of pathological blackness presented as black normality. In short, Capécia's autobiographical novel provides supposed insight into social forces that are at work in the lives of colonized people of the Antilles.

Valorization of whiteness is well known in all of the Caribbean. In Fanon's time—and arguably today, as well—there were two principles at work in the life of the people of these islands, where the demographics were typically similar to Martinique's: a small white population from Europe, a small population of “local” or Creole whites, a population of brown people (usually mulattoes and, in the Anglophone Caribbean, a small number of Chinese and East Indians), and the majority black population. Capécia characterized these populations as “France's whites,” “Martinican whites,” “mulattoes,” and “*nègres*.” (In Jamaica, an Anglophone island, one hears of “whites,” “white *neygas*” [“white niggers”], “browns” and “coolies,” and “blacks” and “*neygas*.”) The seriousness of these categories is such that in, for instance, the island of Hispaniola it was a major factor in undermining the goals of the Haitian Revolution, and in the Dominican Republic, the dictator Rafael Trujillo declared, with his policy of *blanquismo* (“whitening”), a popu-

lation of white and Native Caribbean, specifically Taíno, mixtures. Many Dominicans came to believe this fiction, despite the history of genocide implemented by the Spanish Conquistadors since Columbus's time leaving nearly no indigenous presence versus a very large African one. With regard to Haiti, Anna Julia Cooper observed:

These color prejudices . . . were easier to hate in theory when one did not live in the places where they had been perpetuated for centuries, and when one knew nothing of the life of the colonies, where they had grown so deep that they were even stronger than all the other social distinctions made between the free man and the slave since ancient times, to the point where a mulatto slave would have refused to obey a free Negro, even if the latter had the audacity to buy him. And we are certainly obliged to recognize that in Santo Domingo the attitude of the mulattoes was even more cruel than that of the white colonists, and that the mulattoes resisted the emancipation of their still-enslaved brothers more than did the white colonists.⁴²

Her description had few exceptions across the colonies with continued consequences of division among racially dominated groups into the twenty-first century. In regard to the other side of the island, Trujillo's effort, endorsed by many Dominicans, in effect eliminated even *mulattos* from the Dominican Republic's racial schema.⁴³ *Mulatto*, we should bear in mind, is from the Latin word *mulus*, which means "mule," and it refers to any mixture between whites (horses) and "negroes" (donkeys). The mule reference illustrates the form of self-deception that permeates antiblack societies: Such racial mixtures supposedly produce sterile offspring.⁴⁴ One could imagine the social ontological forces threatened by a "fertile mulatto," who is supposedly a contradiction of terms. Some communities attempt to resolve the contradiction through pure white identification. The claim of brown Dominicans being white and Taíno amounts to their not being mulatto (black and white). In Puerto Rico, such reasoning in the Latin Caribbean is a source of amusement through many poems with the riff, "You say you're white, then show me your grandmother," which alludes to a history of infusion of whiteness in the black population that both contradicts claims of purity and issues a reminder of their often falling short of romance. Notice the Puerto Rican adage's absence of gender symmetry; one does not ask, in other words, for the racial snob to produce her or his black "grandfather." Implicit is the social convention that many mulattoes face concealing not

only the existence of a recent black ancestor but also that the union with the white ancestor was often without the conventional blessing of wedlock. The number of white women who had their relationships with black men concealed by the morphological whiteness of their offspring during those times also substantiate the point since they, unlike many of their black female counterparts, had reasons to authenticate their child's whiteness with a claim to *purity* instead of *mixture*.⁴⁵

Capécia, Fanon observes, could not describe her lover's beauty beyond the fact that he was blond, had blue eyes, and was white. He points out that her childhood bears witness to a woman of action. In her early years, she attempted to "blacken" the world by throwing ink over lighter-skinned children and whites who insulted her. Learning the limitations of her efforts, she switched to whitening her environment, to laundering it, to "cleaning" it. She became a laundress. But that was not sufficient, and in spite of the success of her laundering business, whiteness could not be achieved without white recognition. Her white lover, André, was a white officer who afforded such a gift. Capécia submits to him totally. In Fanon's Hegelian reading—where a Lord–Bondsman relationship emerges in struggles for recognition—André "is her lord." He continues: "She asks nothing, demands nothing, except a bit of whiteness in her life" (*Pn*, 34). She supports him, and at one moment convinces him to take her to an upper-class social of whites, where she is humiliated by the behavior of the white women there: "The women," she writes, "kept watching me with a condescension that I found unbearable. I felt that I was wearing too much makeup, that I was not properly dressed, that I was not doing André credit, perhaps simply because of the color of my skin—in short, I spent so miserable an evening that I decided I would never again ask André to take me with him" (*Pn*, 35).⁴⁶ Why did Capécia find all the faults in *her*? Why didn't she simply admit that those white women were a group of racists or that André was both racist and spineless?

In her references to blacks, Capécia spared no invective, especially in her subsequent *La nègresse blanche*, where black men are typically referred to as "*nègres*" (with the meaning of "niggers") and black women as "*nègresse* whores" and "sluts" (with the meaning of "nigger whores and sluts"). The answer is simple. Whites can do no wrong. They are gods. Fanon observes her outrage at the film *Green Pastures*, which has God and the angels played by black actors. Her protest: "How is it possible to imagine God with characteristics of a *nègre*? This is not my vision of paradise. But, after all, it was

just an American film" (*Pn*, 41).⁴⁷ We know the god of Capécia's theodicy and, by extension, her paradise.

At one point, Capécia is delighted to discover that her maternal grandmother was white. Fanon's response, in stream with what is said in Puerto Rico, is that

Since he is the master and more simply the male, the white man can allow himself the luxury of sleeping with many women. This is true in every country and especially in colonies. But when a white woman accepts a black man there is automatically a romantic aspect. It is a giving, not a seizing. In the colonies, in fact, even though there is little marriage or actual sustained cohabitation between whites and blacks, the number of hybrids is amazing. This is because the white men often sleep with their black servants. (*Pn*, 37n5)

After quoting in the same note Manoni's representation of French soldiers' liaisons with young Malagasy women as free of racial conflict, Fanon adds:

Let us not exaggerate. When a soldier of the conquering army went to bed with a young Malagasy girl, there was undoubtedly no tendency on his part to respect her entity as another person. The racial conflicts did not come later; they coexisted. The fact that Algerian colonists go to bed with their fourteen-year-old housemaids in no way demonstrates a lack of racial conflicts in Algeria. No, the problem is more complicated. And Mayotte Capécia is right: It is an honor to be the daughter of a white woman. That proves that one was not "made in the bushes." (This expression is applied exclusively to all the illegitimate children of the upper class in Martinique; they are known to be extremely numerous: Aubery, for example, is supposed to have fathered almost fifty.)

Fanon's remarks hardly represent hatred of women of color or a failure to understand their situation. He is addressing a reality that permeates every racist society. How was it, for example, that so many mulattoes emerged during slavery and in postbellum nineteenth-century America when there were laws against miscegenation? One need simply look at Angela Y. Davis's classic study, *Women, Race, and Class*, and recent genetic studies in the former colonies to find answers to such questions.⁴⁸

Black-hating blacks and mulattoes often regard whiteness by itself as a good, but evidence of voluntary gifts of whiteness is a bonus. In *Nini*, there

is an educated black male accountant, Mactar, who pursues a mulatta stenographer, Nini. Of Mactar, Fanon writes, "One must apologize for daring to offer black love to a white soul. . . . Just as Mayotte Capécia tolerates anything from her lord, André, Mactar makes himself the slave of Nini, the mulatta" (*Pn*, 44–45). Mactar is rebuked to the point of the mulatto community attempting to sic the police on him. In the story, a white man eventually offers his hand in marriage to the mulatta, which occasions a celebration of hope among the mulatto community and a new level of degradation: Mulattas who were engaged to mulattoes were now rebuked for failing to achieve a higher possibility.

Where does all this lead? There are two principles that emerge in an anti-black society. They are "be white!" and "avoid blackness!" Capécia and Nini represent these edicts thus: "There are two such women: the *negresse* and the *mulâtresse*. The first has only one possibility and one concern: to turn white. The second wants not only to turn white but also to avoid slipping back" (*Pn*, 44). These two principles structure the failure of these women's effort to escape. For the white lover's desire to serve as a transformation of their blackness, it must be either a love born from their love for blackness or their hating blackness but failing to see it in the beloved. The first has to be rejected because such love would devalue the lover's affections in the anti-black black's eyes, for the aim of the pathology was to eradicate blackness. This rejection eliminates a *third* possibility, that the white lover both loves blackness *and* happens to love the beloved, for the lover's loving blackness would ruin the conjunction. So we go to the second. There, the problem is that a white lover who hates blacks but is in love with a black through denying the blackness of the beloved is lost in a game of self-deception or bad faith. The self-deception is twofold: Both the white lover and the black beloved would be in bad faith. The white lover's self-deception would be one about his beloved's blackness. The black beloved's is, however, another matter. There, the deception emerges from the meaning of what the white lover offers her. In this case, recalling Willy Apollon's observation of words of love, it will be "words of whiteness." We find ourselves here on the plane of narcissism, a phenomenon to which Fanon refers throughout the text. Fanon writes of many efforts by blacks to be "seen" in a special way, to be seen as white. On narcissism, Jean Baudrillard has argued that the narcissist seeks a deluding self-image in the eyes of others and is thus seduced by the deception. He writes:

"I'll be your mirror" does not signify "I'll be your reflection" but "I'll be your deception." . . . *To seduce is to die as reality and reconstitute oneself as illusion.* . . . Narcissus too loses himself in his own illusory image; that is why he turns from his truth, and by his example turns others from their truth.⁴⁹

Similarly, Heinz Kohut has identified a form of rage that he calls "narcissistic rage." Narcissistic rage manifests itself as hatred of limitations in one's desire to live without limitations.⁵⁰ The enraged narcissist desires to be beautiful or special without limitation, which amounts to being the most beautiful, the most intelligent, the most exceptional, and so on, to the point of becoming, in a word, godlike or, even better, a god. In stream with Baudrillard's depiction, narcissistic rage invites seduction because no human being is a god, which means the desire from such rage requires a lie to the self. The demand of narcissism is for others to be the narcissist's mirror, to offer the narcissist a desired image, an image of the world as the narcissist would like it to be. Veiled by "I will be your mirror" is the truth: "I will be your lie." Perhaps the quintessential modern allegory of narcissism is the effort of the stepmother in the Brothers Grimm's fairytale "Snow White."⁵¹ The stepmother queen looks into the mirror and orders it to tell her what she knows deep down is not true and cannot be maintained. Even if one were once the most beautiful woman in the land, it defies reality always to remain so. One could be so, if and only if, one is the last woman in the land, and even there the criteria for beauty would become vague, if not absurd. The mirror's eventual answer to her query is, however, simple and imposes an objective limit on her lie: Snow White. The elimination of Snow White, whose name signifies both white virtue and the coldness (snow) of truth (white), becomes a necessary condition for the preservation of her lie. (Oddly enough, the third element isn't in her name: her blood-red lips, which, perhaps, signify life and are perhaps a reason for her extraordinary ability to survive.) Thus, the mirror is, in the end, not the lie, but instead her projected mirror becomes her narcissistic fantasy.

Fanon's discussion of the effort to escape on the level of intimacy portrays a tale of narcissism. Narcissism is the theme of some of his examples along the way:

I was talking only recently to one such woman [who deplored black men]. Breathless with anger, she stormed at me, "If Césaire makes so

much display about accepting his race, it is because he really feels it as a curse. Do the whites boast like that about theirs? Every one of us has a white potential, but some try to ignore it and others simply reverse it. For my part, I wouldn't marry a *nègre* for anything in the world." Such attitudes are not rare, and I must confess that they disturb me, for in a few years this young woman will have finished her examinations and gone off to teach in some school in the Antilles. It is not hard to guess what will come of that. (*Pn*, 38)

No doubt Fanon was added to Césaire on this woman's list. We will see, however, that this woman's assessment of Césaire is not without some validity, for would not valorization of blackness also be a form of narcissistic rage? What Fanon has in mind, however, is brought out further by another example: "I knew another black girl who kept a list of Parisian dance-halls 'where-there-was-no-chance-of-running-into-nègres'" (*Pn*, 40). One could imagine what such a woman expected to see in those dance halls. Imagine what it would take for her to be in a room with no "*nègres*." It would, indeed, have to be a room with no mirrors save the eyes of the white patrons. Those eyes, should they behave without irritation, should they behave as though things were "normal," would affirm that black woman's self-deception: It would seem as though there were *no* blacks in the dance hall, and since she would be among the patrons, then she would be among the no-blacks-in-the-dance-hall. Those whites would be her mirrors, or, as Baudrillard informed us, what she wants—namely, her lie. This is what Capécia sought when she demanded André to take her to a white social. What the gathering and he offered her were the self-deceiving words of whiteness, words that only whites could offer her. The situation is a failure because love is what should appear on the personal terrain; *André*, not his whiteness, should have offered her existence something. *André*, however, doesn't seem to have deserved even her near-white kind of love, for the novel ends with his playing a very typical role of the white French military toward black female love by abandoning her and their child, and she is ironically thankful for the bit of whiteness left in her life. Love, in this liaison, was unattainable because of the imposition of whiteness; no love words, only white ones, remained.

Although Fanon formally examines the failure of the man of color in the succeeding chapter, he hints at it early on in his discussion of Mactar and Nini. Mactar was also a Capécia, but he was so in relation to a mulatta. If Mactar, or any black *male* for that matter, lives as a *man* in the Lacanian

framework of value-endowing words, then the issue would have been what he brought to Nini, not what Nini brought to him. His words of love should have been enough. But since he is also Capécia, then he sought something from Nini, her words, that disrupt the order of patriarchal bourgeois European society. Fanon returns to this theme in his formal discussion of the man of color, where the focus is Jean Veneuse, the protagonist of René Maran's autobiographical novel, *Un homme pareil aux autres* ("A Man Like Others"), whom he describes as "a lamb to be slaughtered" (*Pn*, 53).⁵² Veneuse/Maran was an orphan from the Antilles who grew up in French boarding schools. In his adult years, he is a bookworm, an "introvert," a so-called "good guy" (*bon garçon*), the "kind of *nègre* one would like many whites to be like" (*Pn*, 53).⁵³ When a white girl flirts with him, he replies: "Courage is a fine thing, but you're going to get yourself talked about if you go on attracting attention this way. A *nègre*? Shameful—it's beneath contempt. Associating with anybody of that race [*cette race*] is just utterly disgracing yourself" (*Pn* 53).⁵⁴ Notice Veneuse/Maran's language of distance ("that race"). The story takes a decisive turn when Andrée Marielle, a white woman, emerges as a love interest. She loves Veneuse/Maran, and he loves her. But Veneuse/Maran tells her that their relationship cannot be.

Now if Veneuse/Maran were white, a standard analysis of the situation would be that he is an abandonment neurotic. Orphaned in his youth, an introvert in his adult life, he is afraid of abandonment, so he abandons others to avoid such an experience himself. That he is black and Marielle white brings a dimension to love and abandonment that draws Veneuse/Maran closer to Capécia than he and Mactar should have been. Marielle writes him a letter declaring her love for him. She has, literally, given her words of love, words that, given the antiblack racial dimensions of the context, should have functioned as well as words of whiteness. But Jean Veneuse needs "authorization," argues Fanon. "It is essential that some white man say to him, 'Take my sister'" (*Pn*, 55). He consults a white male friend, M. Coulanges, who replies with the much-sought words of whiteness:

In fact you are like us—you are "us." Your thoughts are ours. You behave as we behave, as we would behave. You think of yourself—others think of you—as a *nègre*? Utterly mistaken! You merely look like one. As for everything else, you think as a European. And so it is natural that you love as a European. Since European men love only European women, you can hardly marry anyone but a woman of the country where you

have always lived, a woman of our good old France, your real and only country. . . . Andrée Marielle, who is white of skin, loves Jean Veneuse, who is excessively brown and who adores Andrée Marielle. . . . As soon as you are back in France, rush to the father of the girl who already belongs to you in spirit and strike your fist savagely on your heart as you shout at him: "I love her. She loves me. We love each other. She must marry me. Otherwise I will kill myself at your feet." (*Pn*, 55–56)⁵⁵

And there we have it: An alienated black man who has joined alienated black women in search of words of whiteness from the same source—the white man—words that affirm them as most desirable, as desired desire, as, in similar kind, Snow White's stepmother attempted to prod her mirror to affirm her. Yet in both classical and Lacanian psychoanalyses, there is a distinction between what a woman wants and what a man wants. The "unhealthy" dimension (for those forms of psychoanalysis) raised by race is that the distinction disintegrates. The antiblack black woman and the anti-black black man collapse into the same. Their desires mark the limitations of their flight into the world of intimacy. Having whitened that world with introduced words of whiteness, they have thrown to the wayside the project of love. Fanon's concluding assessment of *Un homme pareil aux autres*?

Un homme pareil aux autres is a sham [*imposture*], an attempt to make the relationship between two races dependent on an organic unhealthiness. There can be no argument: In the domain of psychoanalysis as in that of philosophy, the organic, or constitutional, is a myth only for him who can go beyond it. If from a heuristic point of view one must totally deny the existence of the organic, the fact remains, and we can do nothing about it, that some individuals make every effort to fit into pre-established categories. (*Pn*, 64)⁵⁶

SOMETIMES A GUN IS A GUN

Fanon's reference to constitutionality announces the quarry of chapter 4, Dominique Mannoni's constitutional rationalization of a supposed colonial complex among colonized people as presented in his *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*.⁵⁷ He had already identified a colonial apologist's tendency in Mannoni's work when Mannoni attempted to treat white French soldiers' access to young Malagasy girls as a situation without racial conflict. Mannoni's error was that he was persistent. He argued, for instance,

that the Malagasy had a colonization complex; their mythic life supposedly had, at its normative core, a pre-conquest conviction of their inferiority. Mannoni went further to compare French society with other European nations and concluded that since the French were supposedly the least racist of the lot, the racism and colonialism that emerged in Madagascar were functions of complexes that were already there when the French arrived.

In response, Fanon advances his famous dictum that either a society is racist or it is not. It is because French society is racist that it conquered, colonized, and imposed its racist structure on the Malagasy. Mannoni's rationalization violates Du Bois's admonition against problematizing people instead of addressing their problems; it is tantamount to claiming that the "appearance of varicose veins in a patient does not arise out of his being compelled to spend ten hours a day on his feet, but rather out of the constitutional weakness of his vein walls; his working conditions are only a complicating factor. And the insurance compensation expert to whom the case is submitted will find the responsibility of the employer extremely limited" (*Pn*, 69). After chronicling Mannoni's various rationalizations, he concludes that Mannoni and all constitutionalist theorists of colonization simply miss the point: All forms of colonial exploitation are forms of dehumanization. The basic problem, echoing his response to his brother Joby's *lycée* professor several years earlier, is to restore the humanity of each degraded person. Mannoni compared forms of colonialism without ultimately bringing colonialism itself on trial. His project was, in other words, a theodicy of colonialism; it was an effort to free the system from critique by blaming the people it dominates.⁵⁸

At this point, Fanon's argument takes an interesting turn. Although psychoanalysis was earlier advanced as the analysis of failure, a dimension of psychoanalysis is rendered untenable in the colonial and racist context: the relevance of classical psychoanalytic symbolism in a colonial setting. Here, the symbolic is not psychoanalytical but *colonial* reality. Instead of black soldiers bearing rifles representing the phallus and sexual fantasies of classical, or even Lacanian, psychoanalysis in the nightmares of Malagasy children, they stood, instead, as signifiers of *real* encounters with colonial violence. They were the images of the black Senegalese soldiers used to maintain the colonial order in Madagascar and the reality of there no longer being pre-colonial Malagasy but instead those who lived in relation to the French who colonized them. This failure of the classically symbolic psychoanalytical interpretations closes three stages of failure—the public, structurally private,

and ontogenically private (the constitution of the organism or individual). Of importance here, as well, is that schemes of rational explanation are at their limits. In each instance, the black attempts to address a problem and encounters himself or herself as the problem. So Fanon then goes to a deeper level of interiority or inward existence: *His own experience as lived*, to which we now turn.

Living Experience, Embodying Possibility

The title of the fifth chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, “L’expérience vécue du Noir” (“The Lived Experience of the Black”), is a riff on the second volume of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, whose subtitle is *L’expérience vécue* (“Lived Experience”). Whereas Beauvoir offers a Richard Wright–inspired existential anthropology across the development of what it means to become a woman from childhood to old age, narcissism to mysticism, and the question of independence, Fanon’s strategy is a more radically personal series of movements. Thus, although an initial meeting of these two great thinkers is evoked in title and philosophical commitments by virtue of existentialism and phenomenology, the chapter is also a paradox of divergence that is ironically, as we will see, convergence.

“Lived experience,” brought into French philosophy through Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s translation of the German word *Erlebnis*, should not, Ronald A. T. Judy reminds us, be understood in English as “the objectively given or an event, but the process in which objects acquire their status as such for-consciousness. It is also in this sense that it is reality.”¹

Fanon begins with recounting a little white boy's use of language out in the open to enmesh Fanon in the realm of pure exteriority, the realm of the epidermal schema. By "pure exteriority," I mean the phenomenon of being seen as a thing, a mechanistic effect governed purely by causal forces, a being without an inner life and self-control.² A striking feature of the chapter is that, along with the one on language, Fanon refers to the protagonist as "the Black" (*le Noir*). This unfolding narrative, which begins with a shocking contrast, makes Fanon's objective clear: "'Dirty *nègre!* or simply, 'Look, a *nègre!*'"

The experience occurred when he boarded a train during his years of completing his studies at Lyon. The force of language froze Fanon in his tracks from words hurled from the mouth of a child. What is actually said in the French is, "*Tiens, un nègre!*" It is a speech-act of demonstration or pointing at an object. Translating it into English as "Look . . . !" captures the act of pointing while seeing. The idea is to imagine being wholly taken over, seized, in the presence of the object. What is rich about the example is that the seizure, so to speak, is also an act of seizing; the boy's experience of being overwhelmed actually entraps what he sees. Fanon thus found himself ensnared, dried up, and laid out in a world of ice-cold exteriority. There he realized his situation as a two-dimensional object as in Euclidean geometry: He was "out there," a surface, so to speak, without an inside.

This passage is perhaps the most influential part of the work. Its impact on post-1950s' treatments of oppression is perhaps equaled only by Ralph Ellison's prologue to *Invisible Man*, a text with which it is often discussed in the critical literature.³ Among the many ironic elements of the passage is its autobiographical status. Its report is paradoxical. Fanon announces the experience of a world that denies his inner life; he examines this supposed absence *from the point of view of his inner life*. The paradox of black experience is thus raised: Black *experience* should not exist since blacks should not have a point of view. Nonetheless, black experience is all that should exist since a black's subjective life should not be able to transcend itself to the level of the intersubjective or the social. The prejudice is familiar: Blacks live, at best, on the level of the particular, not the universal. Thus, black experience suffers from a failure to bridge the gap between subjective life and the world. It is an experience that is, according to racist logic, not experience. Fanon describes this troubled experience at the outset:

I arrived in the world anxious to make sense of things, my spirit filled with desire to be at the origin of the world, and here I discovered myself an object among other objects.

Imprisoned in this overwhelming objectivity, I implored others. Their liberating regard, running over my body that suddenly becomes smooth, returns to me a lightness that I believed lost, and, absenting me from the world, returns me to the world. But there, just at the opposite slope, I stumble, and the other, by gestures, attitudes, looks, fixed me, in the sense that one fixes a chemical preparation with a dye. I was furious. I demanded an explanation. . . . Nothing happened. I exploded. Now, the tiny pieces are collected by another self. (*Pn*, 88)

Reaching to the social world, he finds himself sealed in a world without reciprocity. He finds himself in a situation of epistemic closure. Epistemic closure is a moment of presumably complete knowledge of a phenomenon. Such presumed knowledge closes off efforts at further inquiry. The result is what we shall call *perverse anonymity*. Anonymity literally means to be nameless. Namelessness characterizes most generalizable features of the social world. It is usually characterized by the indefinite article “a.” One sees “a student” or “a passerby” or “a police officer” or “a man” or “a woman.” In ordinary encounters, we admit limited knowledge of individuals who may occupy these roles or social identities. The encounters become skewed, however, when we presume complete knowledge by virtue of individuals who exemplify an identity. The schism between identity and being is destroyed, and the result is a necessary being, an overdetermined, “ontological” reality. To see someone this way is to close off possibilities. It takes the form of the command and the declaration instead of the interrogative; one does not, in other words, ask questions because one presumes that one already knows all there is that needs to be known. The person seen in this way is never spoken to, never queried, but instead simply spoken about and, at best, ordered with special words as, say, commands to a Pavlovian dog. In Fanon’s words:

I am overdetermined from the exterior. I am not the slave of the “idea” that others have of me but of my appearance.

I move slowly in the world, accustomed to no longer pretending to appear. I move by crawling [*reptation*].⁴ Already the white eyes, the sole truth, dissect me. I am *fixed*. Having prepared their microtome, they objectively cut away pieces of my reality. I am betrayed. I feel, I see, in

those white eyes, that it is not a new man who enters, but a new type of man, a new genus. What?—*a nègre!* (*Pn*, 93)

Fanon uses theriomorphic language, suitable for describing animals, to highlight the subhuman dimensions of his two-dimensional, epidermal being. He proceeds by “crawling,” devolving into an insect-like existence; his antennae pick up racist snippets here and there:

I slip into corners, and my long antennae pick up axioms strewn over the surface of things—*nègre* underwear smells of *nègre*—*nègre* teeth are white—*nègre* feet are big—the *nègre*'s broad chest—I slip into corners, I remain silent, I aspire for anonymity, for oblivion. Look, I will accept all as long as I am no longer noticed!

Eventually, he devolves to the point of an amoeba under a microscope. He experiences his historicity as a false history devoid of a proper relation to reason. Between reason and history, theory and practice, there is *experience*, which in this case is the realization of a situation that stimulates an existential struggle against sedimented, dehumanized constructions:

I was simultaneously responsible for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I gave myself an objective look, and I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics—and my eardrums were battered by beats of cannibalism [*et déforcèrent le tympan l'anthropophagie*],⁵ intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: “*Y'a bon banania!*” (*Pn* 90)

Banania is a French cereal consisting of banana flour, cocoa, and sugar. The product came on the market in 1917 with Bonhomme Banania (“Good-man Banania”), a Senegalese soldier happily consuming the cereal (see Figure 1). His motto: “*Y'a bon banania!*” “*Y'a bon*” is so-called “petit-nègre” for “*C'est bon!*” (“It's good!”).⁶

Fanon has much to say on the use of smiling blacks for the promotion of products; the smile is the “gift” of the happy slave. Over the years, Bonhomme Banania's human features gave way to simian ones, to the point of a recent logo that resembles a smiling monkey wearing a fez (see Figure 2). There is, as well, the obvious connection between blacks and apes through the mediating symbol of banana flour. It is a black African—nay, a Senegalese!, the supposedly most “savage” of the bunch—the marketing campaign suggests, who could *really* appreciate a quality banana flour cereal.⁷



Figure 1. Banania advertisement, 1915.



Figure 2. Banania cereal box cover, 2005.

The struggle here is no less than Promethean. It is an embodied struggle against forces that are not readily identifiable; how could it be that the mere invocation of *le nègre* draws upon forces, as if by magical incantation, and seizes him so? Such seizure could be understood through an exploration of the body, the aspect of Fanon that was blown apart and reconstructed as an overdetermined “thing.”

Fanon at first observes that he wants to laugh but *cannot*. It is not until he risks public harm by insulting the boy’s mother, a white woman—“Fuck the handsome *nègre*, Madame!” (*Pn*, 92)⁸—that he is able to be amused (“*s’amuser*”) or laugh at the situation and then move on to an engagement with assessing the larger problem, with, that is, reason:

I would personally say that for a man whose only weapon is reason there is nothing more neurotic than contact with the irrational [*l’irrationnel*]. I felt knife blades open within me. I decided to defend myself. As a good tactician, I intended to rationalize the world and to show the white that he was mistaken. (*Pn*, 95)

But, he soon discovers, reason proves limited: “I became disillusioned. That victory played cat and mouse; it mocked me. . . . When I was there, it [reason] was not; when it was there, I was no longer” (*Pn*, 96).

Fanon cites scientists from the humanitarian World Health Organization presenting the racist hierarchies *scientifically*.⁹ Scientific racism presented an antinomy in antiracist reason, an antinomy similar to the verdicts he found with philosophical resistance. The same could be said for history. Although blacks live in history, it seemed as though blacks were invisible to it; blacks seemed to be, as Hegel claimed in the introduction to his *Philosophy of History*, patently *not* historical.¹⁰ Against history and reason, Fanon then attempts *poetic* resistance, resistance on the level of affect. The shepherd who will bring him to that salvation? Senghorian and Césairean *Négritude*.

The encounter with *Négritude* betrays an odd dimension of the narrative. Fanon’s experience with *Négritude* predates the founding moment of reflection in the chapter. He was introduced to it during his *lycée* days in Martinique, through his brothers’ teacher Aimé Césaire, who had coined the term and presented his ideas in *La Revue Tropicque*, the journal that he edited with his wife, Suzanne, in addition to his now classic *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*.¹¹ Fanon had in fact adopted *Négritude* to the point of, as we saw, working for Aimé Césaire’s election to the mayorship of Fort-de-France on the Communist ticket. His introduction to the Senghorian

brand of Négritude was no doubt through Césaire, as some of Senghor's influential essays were written in the 1930s. Fanon's critical relationship to that exemplar of Négritude came about in 1948, however, during his studies in Lyon. Senghor had edited *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*.¹² The volume was marked not only by the uniqueness of its poetry, but also by the foreword, "Orphée noir" ("Black Orpheus"), written by Jean-Paul Sartre, a classic to which we shall shortly turn.

Négritude grew out of an exchange between Francophone blacks in Paris and blacks from the United States in the years of the Harlem Renaissance and those in the (often overlooked) Haitian Renaissance.¹³ According to D. A. Masolo,

During this time [1931–32], a Martinican group, led by Paulette (or Andrée) Nardal founded and published six issues of *Revue du Monde* (*The Black World Review*), a bilingual review to which leading exponents of the black movement contributed articles. In addition to the exchange of views in the review, frequent meetings also took place between Africans, Antilleans, and leading Afro-American intellectuals in Paris. . . . Thus the influence of the Harlem Renaissance upon the birth of négritude was not only from a distance; it was also direct, through personal contacts.¹⁴

F. Abiola Irele, however, points out that the three among the established founders of Négritude were also heavily influenced by the poet Etienne Léro, who co-founded, with René Ménénil and Thélus Léro, the journal *Légitime Défense* (1932), which brought together surrealism and Marxism as resources for resistance against black degradation:

Léro's poetry was neither original nor of a high quality. But with this single manifesto he set in motion a process which was to outlive him, and to be prolonged by the efforts of three other poets: Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, and Léopold Sédar Senghor. The three founded their own paper, *L'Étudiant Noir* [in 1930], which appears to have brought together Africans and West Indians. This was also the period in which Césaire produced his masterpiece, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, published in a little known journal, *Volontés*, in 1939, in which the word Négritude first appeared in print.¹⁵

The aim of Négritude writers was to rehabilitate the image of the *nègre* through writing or expressing a positive or affirming blackness. The reader

may notice the shift from the short accented vowel “è” to the longer emphasis “é” in the words *nègre* and *Négritude*. As Césaire later explained: “We adopted the word *nègre* as a term of defiance. . . . There was in us a full defiant will, and we found a violent affirmation in the words *nègre* and *Négritude*.”¹⁶ The three younger proponents took the movement into a more cultural direction. After World War II, *Négritude* began to gain influence among a broader group of black Francophone intellectuals—perhaps because of similar sentiments as Fanon’s after having fought in that war and witnessing affirmations of the racial practices that preceded it—which led to the next important step in the development of *Négritude*, which, according to Irele, was

taken independently of the “triumvirate”—by Alioune Diop, a Senegalese who in 1947 founded the review *Présence Africaine* with the collaboration of the most eminent personalities in the French literary and academic circles. This marked a decisive stage. *Présence Africaine* soon opened its own publishing section and helped to give a concrete formulation to the movement, by bringing out a series of works by Black writers and other scholars on African and Negro literature and problems.¹⁷

The next two important developments were the publication of Cheikh Anta Diop’s *Nations: Nègres et culture* (1954), published by *Présence Africaine*, which forcefully articulated the blackness of Egyptian civilization, and Senghor’s radicalizing his position of black and white difference as a departure for his brand of *Négritude*, in which he sought metaphysical grounding of African art. The culmination of these reflections was Senghor’s succinct reformulation, albeit also a critique, of Arthur de Gobineau’s famous racist diatribe: “*L’émotion est nègre comme la raison hellène*” (“Emotion is black as reason is Hellenic”).¹⁸

Senghor’s argument has unfortunately been mischaracterized as advocating some inner essence or substance notion of essential difference or comparison. His use of “emotion,” however, is not identical with the way the word is used in English—for example, when a person is derided as being “emotional.” It is more like the word “affect,” where being “affective” is similar to being passionate, involved, in a word, “living.” Thus Senghor focuses on motion-oriented activity, such as “rhythm,” to illustrate his point. We should bear in mind the obvious etymological link between “motion” and “emotion.” Senghor is criticizing a metaphysics premised on stillness of being, of a view of reality as fixed, frozen, motionless. Souleymane Bachir

Diagne correctly points out that the essay on which Fanon and many others are basing their judgment, “Ce que l’homme Noir apporte” (“What the Black Man Brings,” published in 1939), is actually devoted to grounding Senghor’s theory of African art.¹⁹ That is why he didn’t refer to “Greek” or “white” but *Hellenic*, the classical antiquated period in which Greek philosophy flourished.²⁰ Senghor was arguing that whereas the expression of reason was the aim of Hellenic art, affect, understood as the “rhythmic *attitude*,” the celebration of life offered by the gods and living with fellow human beings and nature’s fecund presence, was that of African art.²¹

Gobineau’s axiomatic, Manichean account of human groupings colors the world with a rhetorically powerful, circular logic; yet one could easily see its immediate attraction to many alienated blacks who want a metaphysical as well as a physical difference from those who persecute them.²² Fanon’s “place” was, in a word, announced. He was in a cat-and-mouse game with reason because he was reaching for something supposedly allergic to his “nature.” His place was in the world of “emotion,” a world of “affect,” of rhythm, song, and dance. Here we find seduction and narcissism, themes of his discussion of intimacy in his second chapter, returning on a different level of inwardness. If whiteness represented the outer, the objective, the realm of reason, the black’s realm will be radically inner and subjective and at home in the realm of Unreason. Fanon cites Senghor on what the black offers: His racial “secretions,” his racial “essence,” is, as we saw, *rhythm* (*Pn* 98). At last, Fanon had thought, he had found a terrain on which whites will lose: the terrain of the irrational. He invokes Senghor, drawing on a musical leitmotif punctuated by onomatopoeia here and there, and the stereotypes of the jungle versus the city, the savage versus the civilized. As is expected in an analysis of failure, his search for *nègre* greatness encounters its impasse in an ironic moment of fusion: Sartre’s “Black Orpheus.”²³

Négritude, Sartre argued, was akin to the reincarnation myth of Orpheus, the lyrical singer, musician, and poet, who descends into the Underworld to rescue his beloved Eurydice but is told, after beguiling Hades, that he could return to the surface world with her so long as he doesn’t look back at her. Orpheus isn’t certain that it was Eurydice following him, so he looks back, loses her, and is subsequently ripped to shreds by mad worshipers of Bacchus/Dionysus, the god of wine, women, and tragedy. Sartre attempted to capture, poetically, the “descent” of the Négritude poets—descent into blackness—which, he argued, subjectively manifested a form of antiracist racism and objectively, following Senghor, a form of “black soul.” It was

“racist” because it affirmed black superiority over whites. It was antiracist because it was a rejection of white supremacy and antiblack racism. Sartre was therefore here addressing an important dialectical move, that perhaps white supremacy could be negated only through playing out its inferiority. Sartre pointed out, however, that what is gained from this move is a (subjective) revolutionizing awareness. From the negative moment that Négritude manifested—descended—the *nègre* could then “ascend” to a universal, revolutionary consciousness, which, Sartre argued, was the (objective) “universal” struggle of the proletariat, in a word, Marxism.

Fanon stumbled. He again suffered disillusionment but this time also with the bitter taste of disenchantment. The reality principle, so to speak, remained white—through Sartre and the skewed iconography of Senghorian Négritude.²⁴

When I read that passage [of universalism from “Orphée noir”] I felt that I had been robbed of my last chance. I said to my friends, “The generation of younger black poets has just suffered a blow that can never be forgiven.” Help had been sought from a friend of the colored peoples, and that friend had found no better response than to point out the relativity of what they were doing. For once, that born Hegelian had forgotten that consciousness has to lose itself in the night of the absolute, the only condition to attain to consciousness of the self. In opposition to rationalism, he summoned up the negative side, but he forgot that this negativity draws its worth from an almost substantive absoluteness. A consciousness committed to experience is ignorant, has to be ignorant, of the essences and the determinations of its being. (*Pn*, 108)

Feeling robbed of his “last chance,” he simultaneously rebukes Sartre for a rationalist impulse that violated a needed, ironically Platonic lie. Reflection was the death knell of the black; it was that from which he was attempting to escape. Sartre, he suggests, should have encouraged his self-delusion, his narcissistic search for his desired mirror image, if but for the sake of instantiating Sartre’s argument of maximizing the negative moment of the antiracist, anticolonial struggle from the spirited chest of the *nègre*. It needed to be the *nègre*’s moment, his resistance, his upsurge:

My *nègre* consciousness does not hold itself out as a lack. It *is* its own follower. . . . What is certain is that, at the very moment when I was trying to grasp my own being, Sartre, who remained The Other . . . was

reminding me that my *négritude* was only a minor term. In all truth, in all truth I tell you, my shoulders slipped out of the framework of the world, my feet could no longer feel the touch of the ground. Without a *nègre* path, without a *nègre* future, it was impossible for me to live my *nègre*ness. Not yet white, no longer all the more so black, I was damned. Jean-Paul Sartre had forgotten that the *nègre* suffers in his body quite differently from the white. (*Pn*, III–12)

Despite this different suffering, of having nowhere to fall because of already having fallen, the reality principle returned with dizzying force. Why couldn't the symbolism articulate, at least, *black reason*? Why was Senghor's (misinterpreted) symbolic hierarchy, in the end, an affirmation of the white constructions against which he has at this point spent twenty-five years fighting?

. . . this *nègre* who is looking for the universal. He is looking for the universal! But in June 1950, the hotels in Paris refused to rent rooms to *nègre* pilgrims. Why? Purely and simply because their Anglo-Saxon customers (who are rich and who, as everyone knows, hate *nègres*) threatened to move out. (*Pn* 150)

No, at this point, Sartre seemed unforgivable. What Sartre didn't understand was that he was in effect counseling the death of blackness through eventual absorption into the light of whiteness. This expectation of a racist society is a phenomenon of which Fanon was aware throughout his life. His early plays and subsequent writings reveal a constant association of whiteness with death. One could imagine what was going on in his subconscious in his many confrontations and even intimate relations with whites. His brother Joby relates that Frantz was convinced that he was going to die young and had resolved to overcome his fear of death through staring it straight in the face. His refusal to walk around the white world, then, could also be regarded as an aspect of his continued struggle with death. The writer's block he experienced at the crucial last two lines in his unfinished play *Les mains parallèles*, for instance, is self-explanatory: "To no longer see mute whiteness/To no longer see death."²⁵ The black poets reached to the great white author for life and received the offering of death.

Fanon ultimately compares Sartre's counsel to be at best that of a man who advises the *nègre* to accept his condition as that of the cripple. He protests:

A cripple of the Pacific War told my brother: “Adjust to your color as I did my stump; we’re both victims of misfortune.”

Yet with all my being, I refuse the amputation. I feel my soul as vast as the world, truly a soul as deep as the deepest rivers, my chest has power of infinite expansion. I offered myself and I was advised to take the humility of the cripple. . . . Yesterday, opening my eyes to the world, I saw the sky from one side while abhorred by the other. I tried to get up, but the silence eviscerated and flowed over me, leaving my wings paralyzed. (*Pn*, 113–14)

Fanon is right: How could one accept such absence when the correlate of the missing limb, the phantom element that haunts the body, is one’s humanity? With seemingly nowhere to turn, Fanon ends “L’expérience vécue du Noir,” his fifth chapter, with ironically coming up against the wall of his own narcissistic desire, a circumstance that put him more in the company of those he criticized, such as Capécia and Veneuse/Maran, through his having sought words of redemption from Sartre, *a white man* (psychoanalytically, at least for blacks, *death*). He was thus lost “without responsibility, straddling Nothingness and Infinity,” and through this confession he began, he admits, *to weep* (“*pleurer*”).

That Fanon concludes by confessing that he wept has not received much attention in the critical literature. Recall his reference to amusement or laughter. That enabled him to cope with his situation, to move on. The role of humor in oppressed communities is well known. There is not only the form of humor in which the oppressor is ridiculed but also self-deprecating humor, humor that creates a paradoxical distance and closeness with their situation. A friend related to me a joke from a Jewish World War II concentration camp survivor: A German officer once yelled to a group of inmates, “Hey—all of you—get out from behind that broomstick!” In many black communities, this “snap” or example of the “dozens” appears: “Your father’s so black that when he fell down, people hopped over him from fear of falling *in*.” There was self-deprecating slave humor; Gypsy humor; Jewish humor—as we see, even in concentration camps; varieties of immigrant humor; and there continues to be self-deprecating black humor. Humor stands in these communities not only as complex competitors of proverbs but also of wisdom; they offer distance. Being *too close* has the danger of being too serious to live. Humor is an antidote to situational paralysis.

Fanon's text is loaded with this form of humor; he sarcastically mocks the *nègre's* tragicomic efforts in this theodicean struggle. But humor has its limitations. It takes much to be able to laugh at oneself, and excess could lead to pathology. The struggle for liberation, for humanization, is thus structurally similar to therapy. Patients may, for instance, laugh at their situation while telling their story, but this laughter is to make them go on although often without genuine confrontation; it is a practice of seeming closeness that leads to distance; the grin, the laugh, also means "too close for comfort." "Breakthrough" in therapy often occurs with tears, with catharsis. Fanon wept because he realized that every effort to avoid the truth failed. It was through such catharsis that he was then able to face the implications of his situation, *in whatever form it may be*. That is why the succeeding chapter is titled "The *Nègre* and Psychopathology." He is now able to face the psychopathological implications of his situation. It is also not the last word on his encounter with Sartre on the question of *Négritude*, agency, and death. Facing reality, as we will see, at times offers surprises.

THE NORMAL, THE NORMATIVE, AND THE ABNORMAL

The first sobering thing Fanon observes is that black psychology is "abnormal psychology." "A normal black child, having grown up with a normal family, will find himself or herself abnormal [*s'anormalisera*] from the slightest contact with the white world" (*Pn*, 117). Whereas there is a conception of normality for whites—that is, their being "human" by virtue of being white—there is no such thing for blacks. An adult black who is "well adjusted," as we saw in our discussion of language, is an "abnormal black." An adult black who is not well adjusted—in fact, infantile—is a "normal black," which ironically means an "abnormal person" or simply "abnormality." To be abnormal for a black and abnormal for a human being is to be in a "Catch-22." It is, as Fanon observes, like Rodin's *The Thinker* with an erection—"there's a shocking image. One cannot decently 'have a hard-on' everywhere" (*Pn*, 134). In this chapter, as in chapter 5, all the motifs of chapters 1 through 4 are repeated but with more insight.

Fanon cites an associational test he administered to five hundred whites (French, German, English, Italian) over a five-year period. When he felt their guard was down, when they were sure they would not "offend" him, Fanon inserted the word "*nègre*." His observation?

Nègre brought forth biology, penis, strong, athletic, potent, boxer, Joe Louis, Jesse Owens, Senegalese troops, savage, animal, devil, sin.

Senegalese soldier, used as the stimulus, evoked dreadful, bloody, tough, strong.

It is interesting to note that one in fifty reacted to the word “*nègre*” with *Nazi* or *SS*. . . . Let me add that some Europeans helped me by giving the test to their acquaintances: In such cases the proportion went up notably. (*Pn*, 134–35)

Black Nazis? The level of investment in blackness as evil was such that all evil, even evil that was patently not black and even antiblack, was invested in the *nègre*. But Fanon’s conclusion goes further: “The *nègre* represents the biological danger” (*Pn*, 134). Fear of the biological becomes fear of the *nègre*: “The *nègre* symbolizes the biological” (*Pn*, 135). The biological, at least as understood in the West, is usually associated with the genital and sex, the result of which is the collapse of the *nègre* to the genital: “One is no longer aware of the *nègre* but only of a penis; the *nègre* is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He *is* a penis” (*Pn*, 137).²⁶ Fanon is responding to this passage from Michel Cournot’s *Martinique*:

The black man’s sword is a sword. When he has thrust it into your wife, she has really felt something. It is a revelation. In the chasm that it has left, your little toy is lost. Pump away until the room is awash with your sweat, you might as well just be singing. . . . Four *nègres* with their penises exposed would fill a cathedral. They would be unable to leave the building until their erections had subsided; and in such close quarters that would not be a simple matter.²⁷

Notice that Cournot did not write of the *nègre* thrusting his phallus into the *nègresse* but into an imagined white reader’s wife (*la blanche*). We’re on familiar ground here, but the danger as expressed by Cournot is not simply of the black male rapist but also of white female desire. The subtext of Cournot’s reflection is that the *nègre* is what a white woman *really wants*. Fanon agrees, but with the provision that she be a *nègrephobic* white woman, that is, a woman whose imagination is saturated with racist myths. The *nègre* becomes, on the level of fantasy and phobia, *he-who-knows*, *he-who-is-at-home-in-the-realm-of-desire-lust-and-flesh*, he who will do to her what, how, and as she imagines she would like to be done.

The absence of Cournot’s imagining the *nègresse* does not invalidate the

thesis that she, too, is genital and biological. The missing premise is that if the white man could no longer please his wife after she has been opened by a *nègre*, his dreams of *sexually* pleasing a *nègresse* is hopeless. In the end, it is not the power of his sword but the authoritative force of the color of his skin. The *nègre* pleases her because her “chasm” is so wide that it cannot even “feel” the *nègre’s* weapon, which makes sexual impact irrelevant for her. She *is* vagina, endlessly wide open.

Yet even this last observation has its additional perversion at the level of narcissistic fantasy: The racist white man may need to believe, ultimately, that he could sexually satisfy the *nègresse*; it would be the perfect fusion of physical and authoritative achievement, which is perhaps one of the reasons for the mixed-race demographics in former colonies with anti-miscegenation laws.²⁸

Fanon has been rebuked by some feminist critics for announcing in this chapter that, as for the woman of color, “I know nothing of her.”²⁹ Everything we have discussed since chapter 2 of *Black Skin, White Masks* contradicts this. He was also well aware of the disparities in medical responses to women of color in life and death. There are examples not only through his close relationship with the women in his family and acquaintances about whom he wrote with the tact of keeping them anonymous but also from his conflicts with colleagues in the medical and legal profession regarding their misogyny.³⁰

What Fanon means at this point is that he lacks *clinical* knowledge of the *nègre* in the fantasy life of the woman of color. The reason for this should be obvious: Racism and sexism are such that female mental patients of color would have been taken to a predominantly white male community of mental health workers at their peril. To this day, people of color prefer to take mentally ill female relatives either to clergy counselors or to social workers because of the reduced danger of sexual violence in those contexts. It is not that these other caregivers are incapable of violating those whom they serve. The difference is that families could accompany their loved ones through services offered by those other care professionals. Fanon, in short, had to rely on nonclinical information because of the demographics of most mental health patients in psychiatric institutions: white men, white women, and men of color.³¹

We could, however, easily provide a response in both popular culture and in clinical studies today. In terms of the former, there are first-world women of color who, for instance, visit places where there are supposedly “real” men

of color who serve pretty much the same sexual role as the fantasy *nègre* in the lives of white women similar to the ones Fanon studied. Sexual tourism in Africa or the Caribbean comes to mind. That the “subject” here includes women of color from affluent countries should not obscure recognition of this phenomenon, for on the level of fantasy and desire the terrain is familiar: “Those men of color *really know* how to please a woman of color,” as we find in the popularity of the novel and film *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* (1998), although the women of color in those other regions may beg to differ.³² In terms of clinical studies, I have yet to come across any research on neurotic or psychotic black women’s imagined conceptions of black men, although I suspect that the conclusion might be the same, given that mental illness usually retreats to the most conventional—even stereotypical—conceptions of normality, where a woman *qua woman* could only be such to the extent to which she is distanced, and even more, *protected*, from race, which requires appealing to the controlling, governing, and policing of racialized subjects.³³

If the *nègre* is both sex and Western anxiety over, and even fear of, sex, then psychoanalysis and other Western human sciences find their limitations here, for “sex” is not only in this instance structurally “deviant” but also, by virtue of its seriousness, not symbolic. It is, as Fanon declares, *phobogène* (*phobogenic*)—material, existentially serious, *real*.³⁴ A phobogenic object is *anxiogène* (*anxiogenic*)—a stimulus to anxiety (*Pn*, 123). Anxiety is a special mode of consciousness. Unlike fear, anxiety pertains to the self. One experiences anxiety when one suffers over what one should *do*, the choices one wishes either to make or to avoid. In existential philosophy, especially Kierkegaardian and Sartrean, it is a struggle with self, over what one will “be” by virtue of what one does or would like to do. Thus, Fanon reflects:

Analysis of the real is a delicate matter. A researcher can adopt two attitudes toward the subject. Or he can be satisfied to describe, like those anatomists who are always surprised when, in the midst of a description of the tibia, they are asked about the number of their own fibular depressions. That is because in their research they never question themselves but others. At the beginning of our medical studies, after a few nauseating dissection sessions, I asked an older hand to give us advice on how to avoid such discomfort. He answered, very simply: “My friend, do it as if you were dissecting a cat, and everything will be fine.” . . . The

key thing is not to accumulate facts and behaviors, but to untap their meaning. (*Pn*, 136)³⁵

The *nègre*, then, stimulates anxiety in the white man, the white woman, and even some, perhaps many, women of color. We have already seen what he stimulates in the heterosexual white woman. In the heterosexual white man, one might follow Cournot's sense of possessing an inadequate "toy." Fanon goes further, however, and argues that for both the heterosexual white man and the heterosexual white woman, the *nègre* is a putative sex partner (*Pn*, 127). In effect, for the white man, the *nègre*-phobic moment is, then, a homophobic, if not homoerotic, one. It is a moment of repulsion and attraction. The violent history of *nègre*-phobia suggests, then, an effort to extricate—as Snow White's stepmother attempted to extricate the object of her limitation and desire—material homosexual desire from the world. The *nègre*-phobic white man hates, in other words, the fact that he *desires* the *nègre*. Even in the example of historical rape or sexual domination of the *nègresse*, it's possible that the subtext of achieving manhood through overcoming her is the humiliation of the *nègre* in mind, as perhaps was going on when Fanon in his youth sailed to fight for France while black women volunteers slept above in the beds of the white officers and troops. But since the world of the phobic is such that symbol and being collapse into one, the *nègre becomes and thus is homosexual desire*. The *nègre* "must," then, be destroyed in a homophobic world. We find here, then, some of the most controversial hypotheses and confessions in Fanon's *oeuvre*:

Let me quickly mention that I have not seen the manifest presence of pederasty [*pédérastie*] in Martinique. This must be seen as the consequence of the absence of the Oedipus complex in the Antilles. We know indeed the schema of homosexuality [*l'homosexualité*]. Recall, however, the existence of what one calls "men dressed as ladies" [*des hommes habillés en dames*] or "godmothers" [*Ma Commère*]. They usually wear a jacket and skirt. But I remain convinced that they have normal sex lives. They take a punch as any guy and are not immune to the charms of women—fish and vegetable merchants [*merchandises de poissons, de légumes*]. In Europe, on the other hand, I have found comrades who have become pederasts [*pédérastes*], always passives. But this was not a neurotic homosexuality [*homosexualité*]; it was expedient for them, as pimping is for others. (*Pn*, 146n44)

I placed the original French words in brackets because Fanon was very precise in his language. Although *pédérastie* could be translated as “homosexuality,” it properly refers to sexual relations between men and boys, usually adolescent males. He intentionally contrasts that term with the French cognate for “homosexual.” Additionally, he deploys Creole expressions, such as *Ma Commère*, to refer to specific kinds of Martinican men. And the fish and vegetable merchants reference is to the fact that these are products sold by women in the Martinican outdoor markets. Fanon here does not deny the existence of heterosexual transvestites and perhaps bisexuals in Martinique. He is also not denying that there are Martinican men who have sex with men (whether homosexuals or bisexuals). His claim that the Oedipus complex is absent in Martinique emerges from his view that Martinican men do not have Martinican *fathers* to replace, which may eliminate the fascination or presence of such affection between boys and men. Even in childhood, such identification is absent:

In the Antilles, the young black, who in school never ceases to repeat, “our fathers, the Gauls,” identifies himself with the explorer, the civilizer, the white who brings truth to the savages, an all-white truth. There is identification; that is to say that the young black subjectively adopts a white attitude. He takes in all the aggression of the hero, who is white,.
(*Pn*, 120)

There is no black father to mirror as The Father. Consequently, there is no struggle for the mother through which to develop aggression to the father that could also be an expression of sexual desire. She is already theirs, her children’s. It is the White Father, the Colonizing Father, against whom such a relation could be made manifest, but that father is structural and rarely made flesh on the level of the personal.³⁶ Fanon here maintains his theme that the slightest contact with the white world will produce an abnormal response; that is why he adds that there are Martinican males in Paris who are marketable as “passive” *pederasts*, since, structurally, even Antillean males of age become boys in such relations. There, white male desire for conquest is reenacted in such roles, though I suspect this is speculation on Fanon’s part, as he provides no evidence for his claim. Interestingly enough, Malcolm X recounts in his autobiography white males who sought black males to play the role of sadists over them.³⁷ For our purposes, what is important is that Fanon speaks of “neurotic homosexuality,” which implies that there are forms of homosexuality that are not neurotic or abnormal.

A more problematic confession for Fanon's critics emerges, however, in the following passage:

I've never been able to hear without nausea a man say of another man:
 "He is so sensual!" I don't know what the sensuality of a man is. Imagine
 a woman saying of another: "She is frightfully desirable—this doll [*cette*
poupée]." (*Pn*, 163)

The contemporary reader would no doubt be perplexed at Fanon's posing as ridiculous what is now an everyday reality in at least most Western countries. Fanon is responding, however, to Michel Salomon's racist fascination with the *nègre*: "But to deny the fact of his skin and his hair, the aura of sensuality that he (the *nègre*) unleashes, spontaneously occasions a certain embarrassment, attractive or repulsive," confesses Salomon; it "is to refuse the evidence on behalf of an absurd prudery that has never solved anything."³⁸ Salomon's remarks are homoerotic, and they collapse the *nègre* into an essentially sexed being ("the fact of his skin"). Fanon's response is twofold. First, he is announcing his heterosexuality. (I will grant there is a form of reasoning that treats any admission of heterosexuality as an act of aggression against homosexuality, but I must admit that I don't know what recourse a heterosexual would have from that point of view but to remain silent.) Fanon is also announcing that *he* doesn't have a "hard-on" all the time, that he is not, in other words, by virtue of his skin, a permanent source of sexual heat. Salomon's sexual fascination with the *nègre* makes the sensual moment a projection, which leads to a failure to read the absence of a desire on the part of the *nègre* for a homoerotic relation with him. The racial codes thus displace the codes of sexual orientation. A homosexual who finds another man sensual is "normal." We could add to this normality the understanding that being attracted to men does not entail being attracted to *any* man and being aroused whenever another man is present, just as a heterosexual man, although not revolted by the thought of sleeping with women, will not necessarily be attracted to *every* woman and, except where such a man considers all women as sexual objects, should not see sex whenever a woman appears. The same for a heterosexual woman with regard to men. The freeness with which Salomon spoke of this attraction, or at least sexual association, suggests a normative feature that makes such reasoning "safe." Salomon can, in other words, if it is arousal, have a homoerotic attraction to the *nègre* without worry of "really" being a homosexual because of the colonization of sexuality that structurally keeps him at a distance where the subject is

raced. If it is not sexual arousal, the question of why seeing or thinking of black men occasions sexual connotations in Salomon's mind warrants critical reflection.

Consider this: Popular films such as *The Crying Game* (1992) and *Pulp Fiction* (1995) could have scenes of white males sodomizing black males and maintain their appeal to predominantly homophobic audiences because of the accepted hierarchies of masculine white aggressives and emasculated, if not always feminine, black passives. We see similar themes in presentations of relations between white males and Asian (including Asian American) males.³⁹ I said earlier that Fanon had for himself a manhood project. It is a project shared by all men—that is to say, including many homosexual men—whose manhood if read as their humanity is called into question. It is a feature of heterosexuality that the heterosexual claims not to desire members of his sex. That Fanon speaks of “revulsion” should be looked at as, say, a homosexual male who finds sleeping with a woman revolting, or a lesbian who finds the thought of sleeping with a male revolting, confessions of which are in no short supply.⁴⁰ We should, however, bear in mind that normativity is such that the logic of symmetry often proves fallacious. Thus, in a society where heterosexuality is the norm, the sexual anxieties of a heterosexual may be a projection of his (or her) own *nègre*—in a word, a heterosexual *nègre's nègre*. Fanon's remark is homophobic in this sense, but one wonders, after that is said, what would count as a lack of revulsion for homosexual contact short of engaging in homosexual relations with the male who issues the charge of homophobia. We have, however, heard a version of that argument before: “You must hate black men because you won't sleep with me.” I recall a colleague who was offended by a white woman who told her that she was homophobic because of her rebuffing the woman's advance. The colleague, who was black, told me that she was offended because of the audacity of her pursuer: “What makes her think that even if I slept with women, I would want to sleep with *her*?”

The example of a woman's anxieties raises, as well, the question of Fanon's presumption of a parallel problem with women. Here, Fanon missed the logic that informed his analysis of Capécia and Nini. Women are, after all, as Beauvoir and so many theorists of gender and sex have shown, sexed in ways that trigger normative acceptance of them as sites of the “sensual.”⁴¹ Cinema provides ample support for this thesis: The female body is regularly exposed without much, if any, threat of censorship. In pornography, “heterosexual” films routinely have so-called “lesbian” scenes without be-

ing “gay” or “bisexual.” A scene with two white males having sex, however, changes the designation. And interracial, all-male sex? Much here depends on, to paraphrase Fanon, who is doing what to whom.

Fanon’s concerns were primarily regarding interracial sexual relations. His discussions of homosexual interracial relations raise the question of the relationship of structure to situation. That the black is already structured as the passive challenges the readings of difference and the extent to which the signs and symbols of psychoanalytical themes could accurately characterize the *nègre’s* condition. Fanon’s ongoing thesis is, as Matthieu Renault observes, a critique of psychoanalysis rooted in concerns of sex and sexuality in the colonial context; the problem of sex, which Fanon is identifying and arguing against, is, Renault argues, its *colonization*:

But Fanon’s theoretical innovation does not rely so much on these arguments as such as on the answer he gives to the *oversexualization* of racialized people. Indeed, contrary to many others intellectuals, he refuses to simply use a method of negation or banishment that would consist in proving the non-objectivity or the irrationality of such sexual arguments/stereotypes, because such a strategy of *desexualization* would threaten to establish the sick European sexuality as a *norm* and a goal to achieve. What is needed is not a desexualization but much more a *decolonization of sexuality*. In that sense, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon gives rise to a *strategic romantic primitivism*, which aims first and foremost to silence the European discourse on the non-European, especially by taking the sexual difference of the so-called “civilized” and “primitive” to (irreconcilable) extremes, in other words, by opposing in a sort of parodic Rousseauian way the “sexual sanity” of the African to the “pathological sexuality” of the European. However, the danger of such arguments is that they remain embedded in a European matrix and threaten to merely repeat a form of Western nostalgia for the primitive.⁴²

That the term “passive” is being used in the negative is a case in point. Being such could also be active if it is doing what one really wants. It is only a standpoint of asymmetrical pleasure that outlaws even imagining what it means to receive pleasure in what appears to be passive. We are here, in other words, exploring the fluid range of human sexuality and pleasure. A racist-misogynous framework in effect reductively sees sexual relations in heteronormative terms of who is playing the role of the man or the woman, with women locked in the supposedly subordinated role of the passive. The

same is tacked onto race. The Fanonian dictum, that social and cultural forces come into play, pushes their ontological claims to the wayside. Such sciences of the human being work, he concludes, to the extent that they remain blind to the existence of those who embody their limits. White normativity enables us to examine the projections of the *nègre* as the site of pathology in an economy of the biological and the sexual *as deviance*, but those projections permeate the social world and render it such that flesh-and-blood people of color, especially black ones, suffer a claustrophobic seal whenever they reach beyond their “place.” Can, in other words, blacks and whites “meet”? Are dynamics of such mutual recognition possible?

BEHIND THE ZONE OF NONBEING

The search for recognition, the focus of the penultimate chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks* follows the path of its predecessors. It fails on two counts—Adlerian psychology and Hegelian dialectics of recognition. The Adlerian move fails because of the superstructural force of the White Man, under whom people of color find equality only among themselves *below* whiteness. As we saw in our discussion of Capécia and Maran, the colonial and racist context created a structure of black male and black female subordination with white women as a mediating term in a struggle for legitimacy. Fanon now moves from a critique of psychoanalysis in the colonial context to the underlying philosophical conditions posed by Hegel’s classic heuristic treatment of the subject in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which formulates the matter in terms of a struggle for recognition between a hypothesized Lord and Bondsman.⁴³ I will at first use masculine language, as that was Hegel’s formulation. Hegel argued that the human being differentiates himself from nature through his ability to do with it whatever he pleases. When he encounters another human being, the project is limited by the other human being’s aiming to do the same to him. A struggle ensues wherein, due to fear of death, one submits and, in exchange for his life, is forced to serve the victor, who now becomes, by virtue of such recognition, his Lord. From the Lord’s perspective, the submission of the bondsman or bondswoman makes him or her less human and more like the rest of nature. (The addition of woman now makes sense because of this addition of the natural environment.) The servant or bondsman/woman serves the Lord through working with nature, which brings back the realization of his or her difference from

nature and his or her ability to take care of himself or herself and the Lord. The Lord, in contrast, becomes indolent and dependent on the bondsman/woman, especially for his recognition as a Lord.⁴⁴

Fanon does not address Hegel's treatment in his *Philosophy of Right*, where the realization of eliminating mastery for an age of equality, freedom, and mutual recognition emerges.⁴⁵ Should this be optimistically interpreted as offering a promised age of mutual recognition born even from the miserable history of *nègre* enslavement? Fanon doesn't think so. This is because neither the Hegelian Master nor the structural White Man wants recognition from the *nègre*. This is where there is departure at the level of gender since with commitments such as marriage there are forms of recognition many heterosexual men want from women. Instead of recognition, what the structural White Man wants from the *nègre* are *work* and bodies, as we have seen in the many eclipses of the black, without points of view.⁴⁶ Instead of labor from a human being, they wanted services from a *thing*.

Here, we see why theoretical articulations of the *nègre's* condition on the basis of Self–Other relations fail. They presuppose the subtle symmetry of “Otherness.” Since racism is a denial to an Other attributes of the self and even those of another self—in other words, even of being an *Other*—the resulting schema is one of location *below*, in the zone of nonbeing. Thus, white–black relations are such that blacks, in their effort to rise out of the zone of nonbeing, struggle to achieve Otherness (to get into Self–Other relations); it is a struggle to be in a position, in effect, *for the ethical to emerge*, for ethics and morality, proper, are relationships between human beings or in terms of demands placed on living in a human world. Thus, the circumstance is peculiarly wrought with realizations of the *political*, where there is an effort to affect the conditions by which human beings can appear in relation to each other. Fanon ends *Black Skin, White Masks*, then, politically and existentially. Politically, he imagines, as did Beauvoir at the conclusion of *The Second Sex*, what eventually became known as Martin Luther King Jr.'s Beloved Community, where everyone joins hands in a celebration of equality and sings “free at last!” but, unlike Beauvoir, through the very different, tortuous route of a majestic, violent struggle.

The message of the failures, then, is systemic: The modern system of human difference is such that it does not by itself hold the resources of human salvation. That the system must be attacked is a revolutionary call; it is the call to fight, to struggle against oppression, against, that is, dehumanization.

In that struggle, Fanon calls for a pedagogy to build (*édifier*, “to edify,” “to build”), through the tremors of beckoning bodies, a questioning humanity. In his words:

Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the *You* [*Toi*]?

At the end of this work, we would like everyone to feel, as *we*, the open dimension of consciousness.

My final prayer:

O my body, make me always a man who questions!

The final words here carry the irony of a call against final words. Fanon changes the direction of the analysis to the second person formal, to the unmediated Reader who can best be articulated as *You*. Notice his use of the personal *toi* instead of the formal *vous*. In existential thought, this *You* is familiar; it is the *You* of the unmediated world of Martin Buber, where *I* and *You* leave no room for “it” formulations.⁴⁷ When I speak to *You*, I am addressing you in your humanity. It is, as we say, *personal* and *intimate*. Such recognition faces the “open dimension of all consciousness” (“*la dimension ouverte de toute conscience*”), another human being devoid of overdetermined presumptions. Such a reaching out leads to a new embodiment. From anger to apprehension to laughter to tears, Fanon leaves us with a *prayer*. And this prayer, ironically, is not to an outside force, to a god, but to the anxieties of the embodied self. His body is called upon to release itself from the enmeshed web of social pathologies to the expression that best suits a mature, free consciousness—the embodiment of questioning.

ASSESSING FANON’S INAUGURAL WORK

What did Fanon achieve at the age of twenty-six in *Black Skin, White Masks*?

In those 188 pages (in the French), Fanon made contributions in several areas of thought. The work challenges the viability of any single science of the study of human beings and presents a radical critique premised on the examination of human failure. In classical psychoanalysis, neurosis and psychosis emerge as aim-inhibited activity rooted in subconscious and unconscious life. Failure there emerges as not achieving—or seeming incapable of achieving—one’s goals. But failure by itself is not properly psychoanalytical. One could experience failure without neurotic or psychotic content. The

psychoanalytical emerges through either one's response to failure or one's role in the constitution of failure. It is where one is the source of one's failure that classical psychoanalysis comes into play. Semiological psychoanalysis moves to the level of structural failure, but there it is on the level of meaning. Instead of failure, "lack" or "difference" is the focus. What one lacks—or the social meaning of oneself as "lack" or "difference"—provides clues into one's failure, which in such a case is a lack of having what one wants. But again, failure is not necessarily psychoanalytic here. One could as well experience failure, which may symbolize "lack," but to fail does not necessarily mean to be a source of failure. Psychoanalysis is thus within the set of human sciences that are limited by his critique, but it is so paradoxically because its failure is as a philosophy of failure; that is, if it succeeds, it fails, and if it fails, it, or at least Fanon, succeeds.

The paradoxes of a metatheory of failure raise the following question: What are the conditions by which we are able, for instance, to analyze structural failure? The terrain there, as we have seen, is formally theodicean. Fanon's point is that the black encounters himself or herself as the source of failure wherever failure is manifested. He has thus, in effect, complicated the psychoanalytical moment. In most psychoanalytical contexts, as we have seen, it is *sexual* difference that is most basic. Fanon has demonstrated a *racial epidermal schema* that functions in such a way as to collapse sexual difference, as we saw in his discussion of Capécia and Veneuse/Maran. The petit-bourgeois roots of psychoanalysis thus find, in Fanon, their relative dimension in the advancement of a colonial schema, where the symbolic falls sway to the ever-encroaching materiality of the real. Fanon complicates the analysis of failure, moreover, by raising an existential critique of the symbolic in an antiblack world. By pointing out the *seriousness* of blackness, he has pointed out its materiality in the world of *negrophobia*, where the black is treated as pure surface, reduced exteriority, a thing, in other words, without an inside, an inner life, or a point of view. In effect, there is not displacement for the symbolic there, which makes blackness operate on the level of reality, constantly, in such a world. So Fanon introduced the importance of experience and systemic resistance. In the end, one *fight*s against racism and colonialism, which is *externally directed* activity instead of internal reflection; his counsel is, in short, *actional*.

Black Skin, White Masks is, therefore, like Dante's *Inferno*, which ends after a seemingly endless journey of witnessing sinful practices of futility with a beautiful ascent that bears witness to the stars, a patently hopeful text

despite its motif of failure.⁴⁸ The performative contradiction of pessimism is the work itself. Fanon ultimately criticizes the collapse of rationality into *Western* or *White* rationality. The text itself—an effort to *reason* with the reader—is a verdict against irrationalism, although it is not a wholesale endorsement of rationalism. *Too much* rationalism is, after all, irrational. It is also unreasonable.

The other areas in which this work has made contributions are remarkable. The analysis of failure is paradoxical. Fanon examines not only failure but also, as we saw, the failure of failure. His work is, in effect, akin to the Kierkegaardian notion of an existential paradox.⁴⁹ An existential paradox is where an achievement requires failure, where a flight from anguish is anguish, or, as seen in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, where good faith is ironically a form of bad faith.⁵⁰ Further like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre, Fanon's work also raises questions of *writing*. Existentialists write in ways that challenge the forms of writing by which they at first seem constrained. *Black Skin, White Masks* is not written in a way that one could readily identify what type of work it is. It speaks about psychology, but not in the format of standard psychological works. It is replete with philosophical references, but not in the form of standard philosophical treatises. Fanon analyzes popular literary texts and makes references to several classical ones, but the other disciplines challenge a reading of the work as a purely literary effort.

One could argue, as well, that it is a phenomenological work, but one would have to add that the existential imports would make it an existential phenomenological one and add that it is so to the extent that it starts from a radical rejection of presupposed method, which, paradoxically, is *its* method. This radical rejection has an impact on the role of temporality in the text. Chester Fontenot has commented that

Fanon's insistence on the present, in fact, on a constant presence which is, in a sense, anti-historical, gives his writings an aesthetic quality. . . . [Fanon] constructs his myth in the present, and focuses on the past only insofar as it gives him a basis to move from the negative zone, which is characterized by the metaphoric tendency toward identification with and assimilation into European culture, to the positive zone, which is characterized by the metonymic urge toward uniqueness and differentiation.⁵¹

Phenomenologists would immediately see these movements as examples of "irrealization," the phenomenological term for the reality addressed by the

phenomenologist after suspension of some of his or her ontological commitments or views about the being of the world.⁵² The “present” as used here is a present to which we can return at any moment to continue our inquiry. It is the present of thought, of inquiry, of reflection. Note, as well, Fontenot’s identification of the aesthetic quality that emerges through such an approach. Maurice Natanson has written on this aesthetic quality in his work on phenomenology and literature, where he has argued that philosophical reflection in literature is phenomenological.⁵³ Despite all this, there are some major differences between Fanon’s phenomenology and that of some of the major proponents of phenomenology. Unlike the great German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, for instance, who is considered by most commentators to be the “father” of what most contemporary philosophers, social scientists, and literary theorists mean by “phenomenology,” whose radical move inward led to a controversial “Transcendental Ego,” Fanon’s radical move inward led to lived experience and the collapse of the symbolic. Fanon walked with Husserl (through Sartre and Merleau-Ponty) as well as the great psychiatrist and existential phenomenological philosopher Karl Jaspers methodologically, but they eventually departed toward different horizons. Fanon’s phenomenology is, then, *Fanonian* phenomenology. He issues radical critique at the level of signs and symbols, and even at the way he utilized the signs and symbols of his investigation.⁵⁴

In effect, then, with *Black Skin, White Masks*, a new type of text was born. It is a way of writing that, ironically, in spite of Fanon’s quips and jibes at the Caribbean, is peculiarly Caribbean.⁵⁵ It is what Jane Anna Gordon calls a creolized style of writing, wherein the writer addresses problems without presumptions of disciplinary, linguistic, or stylistic allegiance, which emerge

precisely in contexts of interruption and loss, in which continuities are broken and people must work with what remains to proceed. If one’s approach to symbolic life and disciplinary formations is to try as comprehensively as possible to keep their many elements living through as close-to-perfect duplication as possible, creolization will offer little beyond the challenge to all forms of conservatism: that for anything to remain meaningful it must be transformed as it is resituated again and again in each new generation and circumstance.⁵⁶

This kind of writing challenges purities in theory and practice as different, even opposing, elements of writing are brought together for the sake of

reality; it is, as I have argued in my work on methodological fetishism and disciplinary decadence, a willingness to reach beyond one's limits for new understanding, which involves, as well, what could paradoxically be characterized as writing beyond writing and thereby evoking what could be called the underside of thought.⁵⁷ Although some Caribbean thinkers may not see themselves as influenced by Fanon, the style of writing that emerges from those who decide to negotiate the divide between the poetic and the historical is such that it stands, albeit often ironically, in his shadow.

Revolutionary Therapy

Black Skin, White Masks was not the only work of Fanon's that came to print immediately after his completion of his doctorate. Composed while he was a medical student, "Le syndrome nord africain" ("The North African Syndrome"), which was published, as we saw, in the February 1952 issue of *L'Esprit*, is an extraordinary fusion of Fanon's expertise in forensic and clinical psychiatry. The essay is an investigation through which he unveils what are by now familiar Fanonian themes:

It is often said that man is constantly questioning himself, and were he to pretend he were no longer so, he would be denying himself. It must be possible, however, to describe a basic dimension of all human problems. More precisely: all the problems posed on the subject of man could be reduced to this question:

"Have I not, because of my actions or abstentions, contributed to a devaluing of human reality?"

The question could also be formulated:

“Have I in all circumstances reclaimed and called forth the man who is in me?” (*Pour la révolution africaine: Écrits politiques* [hereafter *Pra*], 9)

The human subjects of study here are North African immigrants in France, and the object of investigation is a mysterious illness afflicting them. Fanon argues that his colleagues' failure to consider sociogenic elements of the supposedly mysterious illness led to their doubting its reality.¹ This doubt was, however, exacerbated by an “a priori attitude,” a nonempirical one, built on the set of European colonial constructions of North Africans. A relationship between physician and patient emerged where “the *patient* was at fault—an indocile, an undisciplined patient, who ignores the rules of the game” (*Pra*, 14). Such patients, when sent off to specialists, were diagnosed with supposedly suffering from the “North African syndrome.” Themes of alienated embodiment return:

The North African syndrome. Today, the North African who seeks a consultation carries the dead weight of all his countrymen. All those who had symptoms, all those about whom it was said: “Nothing you can sink your teeth into.” (Meaning: no lesion.) But the patient who is here, in front of me, this body that I am forced to presume swept by a consciousness, this body that is no longer quite a body or at least that is doubly a body because it is frightened—this body that asks me to listen to it without dwelling on it—fills me with revulsion. (*Pra*, 14)

An option for the physician was to explore this “syndrome” as a form of psychosomatic illness, as perhaps even a form of hypochondria. Fanon examines recommendations made by Dr. E. Stern, in the article “Médecine psychosomatique” (“Psychosomatic Medicine”).² Here Fanon's thesis of the limit of Western presumptions of the universal scope of the sciences channels his discussion in *Black Skin, White Masks* and reasserts the humanistic argument of his doctoral dissertation. What each of Stern's recommendations misses is the meaning, content, and impact of the abstract patient in the face of a flesh-and-blood being whose humanity is questioned. How could the patient's “relations with his associates” be examined when the physician knows only how to “perceive” such patients without “seeing” them? The patient's “occupation and preoccupations” are difficult to determine in a world of exploitation where he is occupied with seeking occupation—that is, looking for work. His sexuality? That boils down to dominant societal expectations of rape and relations with prostitutes. His “inner tension,” for

a being who is overdetermined as a pure outside? “You might as well speak of the inner tension of a stone” (*Pra*, 18). His “security or insecurity”? Fanon suggests an exclusive disjunction: Eliminate the first term and one will see that the condition is claustrophobic insecurity. As Fanon goes on, the conclusion of what it means to attempt living in a society that militates against one’s humanity comes to the fore: Death. The North African syndrome is about a living death:

Without family, without love, without human relations, without communion with the community, the first encounter with himself will be a neurotic mode, a pathological mode; he will feel empty, lifeless, in bodily struggle with death, a death on this side of death, a death in life, and what is more pathetic than this man with strong muscles who tells us in his truly broken voice: “Doctor, I’m going to die.” (*Pra*, 18)

Where is this troubled man to go when his home has become a colony in which his ways of life have been disrupted and left scarred by the colonial relations of dependency that he now finds at the centers of empires that have announced his place as one of their subjects? Fanon’s counsel to the physician in this situation? Recall his remark in *Black Skin, White Masks* about his idealism—that those who fail to do their best to forge a human relationship in such situations are “scum.” “If YOU [TU] do not demand the man,” he queries the physician in the personal voice in the final paragraph of the essay, “if YOU do not sacrifice the man that is in you [*toi*] so that who is on this earth is more than a body, more than Mohammed, by what sleight of hand must I acquire the certainty that you, too, are worthy of my love?” (*Pra*, 21).³

So Fanon went searching for ways to cultivate such love. After completing the revisions to *Black Skin, White Masks* and returning to Martinique, where he practiced general and forensic medicine for a few months, Fanon determined he did not want to continue practicing medicine there. According to Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, Fanon soon realized that

the essential problems facing Martiniquans were political and economic. Most of the patients who came to see him suffered from maladies the primary causes of which were nutritional deficiency, poor sanitation, and poor public health practices. The possibilities of fundamental reform seemed remote. French domination had long permeated every aspect of Martiniquan life. The economy, the culture, and the psyche

were deeply penetrated. The *Békés*, a wealthy white aristocracy, was as powerful and hostile as ever.⁴

The structural disparities made even his work in forensic medicine a challenge, as this incident, related by Clément Mbom, attests:

When [Fanon] returned to Martinique for a short stay, he performed autopsies. After exhuming the body of a woman who had died three months earlier he discovered that the corrupt doctor on the case had falsified her death certificate, hiding the fact that her husband had beaten her to death.⁵

The uncharitable readings of Fanon's life and thought as a valorization of violence, to which I will later turn, are caricatures of the man that elide much of what he experienced as a forensic and clinical psychiatrist before his later participation in armed struggles. A nuanced reading of his life at this stage reveals a story not only of ongoing violence in the life of colonized subjects but also other layers in need of reflection, as this encounter with domestic violence and his role in uncovering its protection attests. Fighting these kinds of abuse requires a society committed to building institutions attuned to the needs and dignity of its citizenry. Alice Cherki's summary of Fanon's brief return to Martinique focuses on the young doctor's realization of the limits of such expectations in his native land:

The experience proved disappointing, and he . . . [complained] of the closed-mindedness and lack of awareness he found there. . . . Martinique had, by and large acquiesced to the *Départementaliste* position that had been embraced by Césaire. . . . [He] summarized his experience as one in which he had "met more trousers than men."⁶

Patrick Ehlen, however, offered an additional interpretation. Fanon had changed. He became the kind of returning Martinican he criticized in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and the towering figure of Césaire left little room for him to be anything but small:

The island he once considered home had, in his absence, become stranger and more alien to him. In truth his old city and his old companions had not changed much; it was he who had changed, and changed a great deal. . . . Even taking a pleasant stroll . . . reinforced how different he had become. A regrettable remark such as, "It was not my good fortune, when in France, to observe mounted policemen" earned only

snickers when he turned to walk on. . . . In his current position, it would be difficult to advance the widespread social changes that could affect any of [Martinique's] problems. And furthermore, the entirety of that role in Martinique—the role of the island intellectual . . . —was filled by the immense figure named Césaire, from whose shadow Fanon now needed to withdraw. Martinique had become Césaire's territory, and Fanon, while continuing to respect Césaire a great deal, needed to tread his own path, and needed to do it in a field of his own.

That summer he closed his office in Vauclin, said good-bye to his mother and siblings, and boarded a ship back to France. He never returned to Martinique again.⁷

I see no reason why the combination of these accounts of his decision to leave Martinique cannot be true.

Fanon arrived back in France in November 1951 as a resident at the Hôpital de Saint-Alban, where he studied with François Tosquelles, the gifted Catalan psychiatrist and founder of the school of “institutional therapy.” Precocious, Tosquelles had been appointed as a physician in the Instituto Pere Mata at the age of twenty-two and had served as the head psychiatrist for the Republican Army during the Spanish Civil War at the age of twenty-four. After the defeat of his comrades, he settled in Saint-Alban sur Limagnole, where he continued his research and clinical work in collaboration with psychiatrists building on developments in psychoanalysis. Tosquelles immediately recognized the talent of his twenty-six-year-old student, who was inspired by the potential he saw in the method of institutional therapy, and the two men became quite close, admiration and love at first sight, as it were, to the point of, as Cherki reports, Tosquelles even honoring Fanon's child support payments for his daughter, Mireille, some years later when Fanon was in exile and unemployed.⁸

A humanistic approach to psychiatric medicine, institutional therapy required the integration of everyday life into the therapeutic process toward the goal of creating a “therapeutic community.” Tosquelles and his colleagues encouraged patients to interact with each other in small groups of ten or twelve to create a structure for mental, social, and occupational therapy.

It wasn't long before Fanon began to seek empirical validation of his thesis of failure articulated in *Black Skin, White Masks*, particularly regarding the limitations of psychiatric approaches to social alienation. Recall our open-

ing observation that Fanon often hoped to have been wrong about the pessimistic aspects of his thought. There seemed to be no hope for psychiatric efforts of normalization in an abnormal society, since, in the end, cohesion and alignment would require making the patient, in reality, abnormal.⁹ The prognosis, similar to that of Freud at the end of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, was for the transformation of the abnormal society, which would enable a normal subject to be also a healthy one.¹⁰ Tosquelles's work offered the possibility that psychiatric work might not be futile.

Fanon's efforts with Tosquelles were fruitful. He worked with Tosquelles for nearly two years, during which he and his mentor coauthored three medical papers defending their therapeutic community approach. Fanon would later reevaluate some of the conclusions that he and his mentor reached, but for now the young doctor saw hope in an approach that raised sociogenic considerations in its therapy.

RETURNING TO AFRICA

In 1953, Fanon passed, with distinction, Le médical de hôpital psychiatrique. The examination qualified him to be *chef de service* (departmental head) at any psychiatric institution in France, its colonies, or departments. Fewer than a third of the applicants passed the examination that year. Fanon was thus by this time a twenty-seven-year-old intellectual with outstanding professional credentials. He was not only a young man with a medical degree and a license to supervise France's psychiatric institutions but also an author of a fine, provocative monograph and several medical papers. What's more, he was a twice-decorated war veteran and a "Martinican," as opposed to a black from other parts of the French Caribbean or Francophone Africa, who were, for the most part, considered by the French to be pariahs. Although Martinicans discovered through their experience in World War II that being black at all was still too black for comfort among most Europeans and their colonized subjects, it was still the case that some blacks were considered "blacker" than others. Fanon thus could have chosen a comfortable existence in many French-speaking cities of the world—in Montréal, Québec City, Brussels, or, perhaps, Paris. It is clear, however, that by the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*, where, as we saw, he made the rallying cry for transformation of social systems, Fanon had said goodbye to a life of comfort and had chosen the path of a life dedicated to social transformation and

revolutionary struggle. For him, returning to the role of a comfortable, petit bourgeois doctor from Martinique would have been unbearable.

So Fanon decided to offer his services to projects of decolonization and liberation in Africa. He wrote a letter to Léopold Senghor, whose ideas he had struggled with in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Like Césaire, Senghor took his thought into a politically concrete direction; he was by then president of Senegal. Senghor never responded to Fanon's letter. One could imagine what a collaboration of Senghor and Fanon would have been. In truth, given Fanon's treatment of Négritude in his first monograph, the two probably would have hated each other. As things played out, Senghor subsequently reveled in the recognition he eventually received from France, which would not have helped such a relationship. Still, perhaps Fanon would have steered Senghor to a more left, revolutionary perspective. Or perhaps the elder would have guided the younger man from his revolutionary proclivities. Perhaps the Fanon of history is such that he could only have emerged through encounters with the North African Arabs, Berbers, and other ethnic groups. We can at best speculate. What *did* occur was that Fanon worked in a temporary position as *chef de service* at the psychiatric hospital in Pontorson, Normandy, before receiving an invitation to become the *chef de service* at Blida-Joinville Hospital in Algiers, Algeria, the kind of opportunity he sought. He immediately accepted and found himself in a situation that has become legend in the history of twentieth-century revolutionary politics.

Arab male nurses administered the day-to-day therapy at Blida-Joinville. In addition to performing menial services, they served primarily as translators of Arabic and French between six physicians and two thousand patients during clinical procedures. Fanon was the only doctor of color. There are conflicting versions of the methods of "therapy" that preceded Fanon's arrival. The version presented by Peter Geismar and Hussein Bulhan is that Fanon came upon a hospital of Arab and Berber male patients chained to their beds and constrained by straitjackets, whereupon he immediately ordered the staff to unshackle them and remove the jackets, thereby serving as their liberator. But according to Fanon's student, close friend, and subsequent colleague Jean Azoulay, in an interview in Isaac Julien's 1995 film *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask*, the patients were never kept in chains at Blida-Joinville.¹¹ Instead, the reference to breaking their chains was, he claims, "metaphorical." By implementing the humanistic approaches of community therapy that he learned and co-developed with Tosquelles, Fanon provided a humane

environment for the two thousand patients. It was *as if* their chains were broken. Cherki, who also interned at Blida-Joinville, reports, "The hospital grounds were vast. Patients were housed in old prison-like structures as well as in newer, more modern facilities."¹² Whichever account one accepts, what is clear is that Fanon was a liberating force at Blida-Joinville. He put into practice a theory of political therapy, which accentuated Tosquelles's model. Miraj Desai characterized this approach as "psychopolitics."¹³ The results were emendations that have influenced emancipatory therapeutic methods of liberation to this day. Among them was the approach of providing an environment that maximized the expression of agency among the patients. This environment was achieved by the introduction of group therapy, sports teams, recreational outings, afternoon tea conversations, a weekly publication titled *Notre Journal* ("Our Journal") for the patients and staff, and the elimination of segregated wards.

Fanon also continued to research and write medical papers.¹⁴ This work was, however, produced during turbulent times. The French had suffered considerable humiliation in their efforts to hold on to Indochina (Vietnam), particularly with their defeat by the Viet Cong at Dien Bien Phu the following year (1954), an event that drew the intervention of the U.S. government into what became, by the 1960s, the Vietnam War. The Front de libération nationale (FLN), a group of Algerian nationalists fighting for national independence, had begun, as well, to gain national support in Algeria, France's most prized colony. Determined to keep Algeria in France's colonial grip, the French implemented a repressive system of torture and other human rights violations to squelch the Arab and indigenous populations' struggle for national liberation. There is no consensus on the estimates, but the carnage escalated until by 1962, the casualties of what became the Algerian War were little more than 17,000 French soldiers and settlers and about 360,000 Algerians.¹⁵ A bitter irony of these figures is that the French, as did the British in their efforts to keep their hold on their colonies, utilized soldiers of color in their military campaigns. There were, thus, Martinicans and Senegalese who managed to have become "Frenchmen" in death despite their failure to be recognized as such in life.

An ironic turn of events was that the leader of the French military campaign in Algeria, Raoul Salan, was also the officer who had personally awarded the Croix de Guerre to Fanon for his heroism in World War II. The poetry of the situation was accentuated by Fanon's decision to utilize his skills as a physician, veteran, and writer in the service of the FLN. Like

Sartre, Fanon was of the opinion that neutrality in such urgent historical situations was an attitude sullied by bad faith. So, too, was the path of taking flight. This is a position they shared with Karl Jaspers, whose position on guilt and responsibility Fanon discussed in *Black Skin, White Masks*.¹⁶ As he chided a friend in a letter reprinted in *Toward the African Revolution*:

When you told me you wanted to leave Algeria, my friendship is suddenly silenced. Images, tough and decisive, surged from the gateway of my memory. . . .

When your brothers ask you: "What happened in Algeria?" What will you answer them?

More precisely, when people will want to know why you left this country, what will you do to extinguish the shame that hangs over your head?

The shame of not having understood, of not having wanted to understand what happened around you every day.

For eight years you were in this country.

And no part of this enormous wound has prevented you from leaving. (*Pra*, 46)

Though left anonymous, the friend was likely his colleague Dr. R. Lacaton. The white settlers had waged a brutal campaign against Arabs and Berbers with impunity from the French authorities, who were also engaged in such activities in addition to the ongoing extraction of intelligence through torture. Fanon's response was to use Blida-Joinville's grounds to train FLN members to become nurses and medics. He instructed them on how to resist divulging secrets when under interrogation, which invariably meant when under torture, and how to utilize ordinary materials as implements of war. He also, along with members of his staff, which included Lacaton, treated injured FLN members. His activities, in other words, rendered him a traitor to France and a champion of anticolonial struggles. The hospital eventually came under suspicion, and members of the staff were brought in for interrogation. Lacaton was among that unfortunate group. Patrick Ehlen offers an account that may put some perspective on Lacaton's decision:

Lacaton was removed from the hospital for several days, and taken to the interrogation room at police headquarters. The police were often more brutal with European suspects than they were with Algerians, viewing nationalist Europeans as traitors to their country as well as to their race. But police had to be careful about leaving evidence of their

manipulations, as Europeans retained some means of legal recourse. They commenced with mere intimidation, leaving the victim to watch as they tortured several Algerians—selected at random from the street—to death. Subsequent efforts at persuasion included submerging the subject in a bathtub to the brink of drowning, administering painful enemas, and prolonged electrocution. When several days of such measures did not elicit any useful information, Doctor Lacaton's interrogators surmised that he was a nationalist sympathizer who was not directly related to the revolutionary effort, and they drove him to the pig farm of a European colonist and tossed him to a sty of angry pigs.

Lacaton returned to the hospital, packed a few of his belongings, and left for France.¹⁷

Fanon, it is evident, had a penchant for martyrdom. As the war escalated, the absence of a clear divide between France's focus on FLN members and civilians led to a collapse of legitimating resources for French authority short of brute force. Fanon found himself in an untenable situation. When in July 1956 the hospital administration decided to punish all Muslim employees after a general strike, Fanon resigned. His resignation letter to Robert Lacoste, the governor-general of Algeria, included in *Toward the African Revolution*, is a remarkable, concise statement of Fanon's position on the practice of psychiatry in a colonial environment.

In the letter, Fanon first admitted the liberal reformism that underlay his early efforts in Algeria: "Although the objective conditions of psychiatric practice in Algeria already defy common sense, it appeared to me that an effort should be made to render less vicious a system of which the doctrinal foundations are a daily defiance of an authentically human perspective" (*Pra*, 50). Then he renounced his situation; in words reminiscent of W. E. B. Du Bois's recognition of the folly of his naive faith in scientism in a world of daily lynching, mob violence, and arbitrary incarceration during his years in Atlanta, Fanon wrote, "But what can a man's enthusiasm and concern achieve if everyday reality is a web of lies, of cowardice, of contempt for man?" (51). His response was to establish the psychoexistential and political dimensions of certain forms of mental illness: "Madness is man's means of losing his freedom. . . . What is the status of Algeria? A systematized dehumanization. . . . The social structure existing in Algeria is opposed to any attempt to place the individual [in a humane place]" (51).

Some commentators, such as David Cauter and (the younger) Françoise Vergès, have argued that Fanon was able to get away with more than the average professional in Algeria because of his status as a Frenchman through his Martinican background. Such a rationalization would have to account for the treatment Lacaton and others received. The tendency of French intellectuals to convince themselves that Frenchness supervenes race is something I continue to find perplexing. It's as if what Fanon wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks* is simply ignored and as though, as biographers such as Bulhan and Cherki have noted, the constant reference to him as "the *nègre* psychiatrist" was somehow anomalous in French society. Even more, the presumption of Fanon's loyalty *as a black who wants to prove himself* could have applied to him as it did to the other Martinicans and blacks from other colonies enlisted in the interests of France. The French knew that many, maybe even most, Arabs hated blacks (and, as many blacks today know across the continent and in the Middle East, that hatred or sense of superiority continues).¹⁸ Couldn't his blackness ironically have been the reason he was able to get away with more by virtue of, in being rejected by both, being presumed an ally of neither and thus, paradoxically, credible for both as a friend who is the other's enemy? This is, in the end, speculation. What is pretty clear is that he was treating both the tortured and the torturers, and growing knowledge of his support for the FLN would have endangered his life and eventually led to his arrest. Thus, the timing of his resignation in 1956 was, as the expression goes, in the nick of time.

After resigning, Fanon went briefly to Paris, where, in September of that year, he participated in the Premier Congrès des Écrivains et Artistes Noirs (First Congress of Black Writers and Artists) held at the Sorbonne. He attended the meeting as a Martinican delegate and presented his remarkably prescient paper, "Racism and Culture," a work also included in *Toward the African Revolution*. The meeting was attended by some of the most influential black writers of the twentieth century, ranging from Richard Wright to Léopold Senghor, and it was the meeting at which he befriended the Barbadian writer George Lamming.¹⁹ Fanon's paper, according to multiple accounts, created quite a stir at the meeting.²⁰

The argument in "Racism and Culture" dovetails Fanon's resignation letter and his early assessment of sociogenic conditions of racism and oppression. Racism is a normative feature of a racist society and is thus a form of systemic rationality:

The racist in a culture with racism is therefore normal. He has achieved a perfect harmony of economic relations and ideology in his environment. . . . In fact, race prejudice obeys a flawless logic. A country that lives, draws its substance from the exploitation of other peoples, makes those peoples inferior. Race prejudice applied to those peoples is normal. (*Pra*, 41–42)

That there can be “racist rationality” renders racism invisible to the dominating group of a racist society: “Psychologists speak of a prejudice having become unconscious. The truth is that the rigor of the system rendered the daily affirmation of a superiority superfluous” (*Pra*, 38). The result is an ongoing struggle against racism where mutations of racist relations recur. From old-style crudities of gross biological distinctions aligned with moral and intellectual weaknesses to exoticized valorizations of innate cultural tendencies, so long as colonizing structures are in place, new forms of racism will emerge. The turn to *culture*, for instance, in itself does not lead to political transformation. In the crude form, the dominating group presumes that there are people without culture. The more sophisticated form concedes cultural attributes to other groups but adds the presumption of cultural hierarchy.

Echoing his position from *Black Skin, White Masks*, the counsel is for active engagement against conquest and colonialism. The conquering group’s culture has to lose its status as the *superior* nation, a status that militates against a genuine encounter of different cultures:

In the course of the struggle the dominating nation tries to revive racist arguments, but the elaboration of racism reveals itself to be more and more ineffective. . . . The occupant no longer understands. . . . The occupant’s spasmed and rigid culture, liberated, finally opens up to the culture of people who have really become brothers. The two cultures can confront and enrich each other. (*Pra*, 44–45)

Fanon concludes that without colonialism, a “reciprocal relativism” of different cultures emerges. By this, Fanon does not mean an epistemological and moral face-off. Instead, he means that notions of one culture being “better” than another would cease to make sense.²¹

Fanon is here addressing a problem raised a half century earlier by Franz Boas in the American context. Rife with social Darwinism, whites in the

Americas were emboldened by conceptions of progress in which the presumption was that white supremacy was an inevitable feature of progress. The indigenous people brought to the brink of genocide and the kidnapped populations brought under slavery were considered, under a model of European societies and their extensions in the colonies, primitive or less developed and thus features of humankind that would be left behind in modernizing practices forging a path to supreme whiteness. Boas's response was to show that this was a distortion of natural selection; there was not, in other words, anything natural about it since there is at no instance a group that is not being affected by another; there was, in other words, no condition of nonhuman factors to which the human beings involved couldn't otherwise adapt.²² Such teleological claims have no business in a theory that simply argues that what survives at any moment is what is enabled by its environment. Further, surviving today does not entail doing the same tomorrow. Thus, everything that coexists at any moment is equally evolved, for the environment sustains each organism. Comparisons in which certain groups are relegated to the status of primitive (that is, belonging to the past) don't work, then, because the fact of their existence means that they've evolved into the present time. The move to culture doesn't change this fact. What racism does, in other words, is to bring to a culture a fallacious understanding of what culture does. Racist culture, in other words, erases itself as culture through forgetting its own flux. Its proponents thus force a form of foreclosure on the peoples they colonize.²³ As in effect people of the past, the dominated group is displaced out of the lived-reality of cultural life. Fanon calls this the "zombification of culture." They suffer a living death.

Fanon examines this zombification as rituals of cultural performance, which are unnatural conditions of cultural life. The people's ways of life are put on display as museum pieces, with the conditions of the organization of relations already in the hands of the colonizing and racist group. Although Fanon is cognizant of this process as a form of harm of the dominated group, his analysis reveals ambivalence as his Euromodernist predilections make him look for sources of overcoming instead of retention. "Euromodern," we should bear in mind, is the error of collapsing "modern" into its European forms. Given Boas's argument, for instance, there is no reason why there aren't simultaneous Afro-, Indo-, and other forms of manifesting that which is modern. This mistake is particularly obvious in Fanon's discussion of the blues:

Thus the blues, “the slave lament,” is presented for the admiration of oppressors. It is some stylized oppression returned to the exploiter and the racist. There is no blues without oppression and racism. The end of racism is the death knell of great black music. . . .

To paraphrase the famous Tomyntee [*sic*],²⁴ the blues is a response from the slave to challenge oppression.

Even now, for many men, even those of color, Armstrong’s music has no real meaning except in this context.

Racism bloats and disfigures the face of the culture that practices it. Literature, the plastic arts, songs for shop girls, proverbs, habits, patterns, whether they set out to attack it or to vulgarize it, restore racism. (*Pra*, 38–39)

This is an extraordinarily asymmetrical reading of the blues. The error Fanon makes is the fallacy of causal permanence, where the conditions that lead to the appearance of a phenomenon become those by which the latter are maintained. Born of racial suffering, the blues, according to Fanon, could be maintained only by that specific malediction. Thus whites who listen to the blues are, in Fanon’s reading, entertained by the suffering their political location has created. Yet this would mean that identification with an aesthetic production requires an intimate link to its emergence. Many people, however, not only enjoy music that is not intimately linked to their personal experience but also attach their own experience to music born of a different one. Another’s suffering social misery could be artistically personalized and enjoyed in terms of one’s personal suffering. As Kierkegaard’s famous depiction of the poet in *Either/Or* attests, we are referring to

An unhappy man who in his heart harbors a deep anguish, but whose lips are so fashioned that the moans and cries which pass over them are transformed into ravishing music. His fate is like that of the unfortunate victims whom the tyrant Phalaris imprisoned in a brazen bull, and slowly tortured over a steady fire; their cries could not reach the tyrant’s ears so as to strike terror into his heart; when they reached his ears they sounded like sweet music. And men crowd about the poet and say to him, “Sing for us soon again”—which is as much as to say, “May new sufferings torment your soul, but may your lips be fashioned as before; for the cries would only distress us, but the music, the music is delightful.”²⁵

Kierkegaard's description points to the beauty of poetry and music born of suffering, but he doesn't answer the question of why the reader or listener is able to identify the beauty as such. There must be something that *connects* the audience to the performance. It is not only black people who sing the blues and listen to it. *Many people do.* There are nonblack people listening to the blues in Australia, Brazil, China, India, Korea, Russia, everywhere. I very much doubt all of them imagine themselves as enslaved blacks on cotton plantations or those occupying prison cells in an unfair criminal justice system. To understand this, one would have to delve more deeply into what the blues are.²⁶ Suffice it to say here that the earlier arguments about double consciousness, potentiated double consciousness, and the dark side of theory pertain to the blues: All address dimensions of life that must be confronted though difficult to accept. In that regard, they reveal the particularity of misconceived universals, and in doing so, paradoxically transcend their own particularity into a more universalizing practice. Thus, while born of black suffering, the blues speaks *to modern suffering itself*. It speaks to anyone confronting the entrails of modern existence, and since that also relates to postmodern existence, transcends its specificity. As Ralph Ellison puts it:

The blues is an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism. As a form, the blues is an autobiographical chronicle of personal catastrophe expressed lyrically.²⁷

The blues is about dealing with life's suffering of any kind in an absurd and unfair world. Because of this, it is the leitmotif of modern life. Black people, we should remember, were produced by the modern world. Their aesthetic productions speak to the age as do few others. We need only think through the many musical manifestations of the blues that have permeated the twentieth century and continue into the twenty-first: swing, jazz, rhythm and blues, soul, rock 'n' roll, beguine, mambo, salsa, samba, rock steady, reggae, calypso, samba, and, now, hip hop. Though this list seems disparate, all have roots in some blues form. Moreover, there are aspects of the blues that exemplify their own aesthetic sensibility. Blues music is full of irony. Its sadness exemplifies an adult understanding of life that is both sober and,

ironically, sometimes happy. It is a nondelusional happiness often marked by self-deprecation and critical evaluation, the kind of happiness or good humor that is a realization instead of a diversion. It is the beauty of moonlight versus sunshine, although the blues dimensions of a sunny day could be understood through our realization of how much could lurk in plain sight. Think of the numbness one seeks from alcohol and the realization offered by the blues, that numbness gets one nowhere. All blues productions remind us that life is not something to escape but something to confront. And it does so in its very form. The classical blues structure is full of repetitions, for instance, that reveal new layers of meaning about the cyclicity of life. And in this structure, although a story is retold, it is understood at different levels, the effect of which is cathartic and after which is a renewed understanding of the point of origin.

The irony here is that *Black Skin, White Masks*—like the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, Nicolás Guillén Batista, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Abdias do Nascimento, Richard Wright, Steve Bantu Biko, and many others, such as the writings of his friend George Lamming and more recently those of the critical legal theorist Derrick Bell, the novelist Toni Morrison, and the philosopher and religious leader Cornel West—is a blues text. In that work, Fanon tells a story that is retold in mounting layers of revelation. At the moment of catharsis—the weeping—the sobriety offers confrontation with a reality that was previously too much to bear: reality without hope of normative approval, a reality in which the dialectics of recognition must be abandoned.

So why was Fanon so shortsighted about the blues? My suspicion is that the Francophone intellectual scene that nourished him had a prejudice for poetry and prose—in short, *writing*.²⁸ Fanon was prejudiced toward the blues because he saw it solely as a performance medium instead of a philosophical and higher aesthetic expression. It will, however, be remiss to argue that Fanon's critique entailed hostility to participation. As his biographers recount, Fanon wasn't a man short of pleasure, and he did listen and dance to the popular music, which simply meant black music, of his time.²⁹

"Racism and Culture" is not, however, Fanon's last word on the blues. His analysis later on in *The Damned of the Earth* (known to most as *The Wretched of the Earth*) offers a different portrait in which he extols the creative spirit and defiance of one of its outgrowths, bebop, which, he argues, transcends the misery of blackness fetishized by whites into the genius of raising the bar and possibilities of musical performance:

A memorable example, and one that takes on a certain importance because it is not entirely about a colonial reality, was the reaction of white jazz experts when after the Second World War new styles such as bebop established themselves. Jazz could only be for them the broken, desperate nostalgia of an old nègre, taken with five whiskies, cursing himself and the racism of the whites. As soon as he understands himself and the world differently, as soon as he raises hope and forces the racist world to recoil, it is clear that he will blow his trumpet to his heart's content and his husky voice will ring out loud and clear.³⁰

Fanon's main point in the essay stands, however: That a society premised on colonialism, whose normative social field is a racist one, closes off the future for the colonized and designated racially inferior subjects, which forces them to "dive into the abyss of the past as the condition and source of their freedom" (*Pra*, 44). Without a future, the zombification of which Fanon warns eventually wears thin. As Fanon endorses outward-directed activity (being "actional"), the failure of inwardness demands struggle against a foreclosed future. Such activity baffles the colonizing group, and the conflict "opens people [with the possibility of] actually becoming brothers. The two cultures are able to confront each other and enrich each other" (*Pra* 45). He concludes that "universality lies in the decision to support the reciprocal relativism of different cultures once irreversibly excluded by colonial status."

We see here a classic Fanonian theme. There is no reciprocal respect without confrontation. Recall why he respected Francis Jeanson, the lead editor for *Black Skin, White Masks*: Fanon forced a situation in which the values of the two men came face to face, and through that encounter respect enabled the production of great work. The metaphor, extended to society, is that people could create a better world if they could enter the project on a terrain that enables the best each has to offer.

REVOLUTIONARY COMMITMENT

Fanon received his notice of expulsion from Algeria in January 1957, soon after his return. This order, Cherki tells us, may have "saved his life when we pause to reflect on the fate of countless 'intellectuals' who had taken up the cause of those who had been labeled as outlaws and brigands."³¹

The Fanons at first went to Lyon, to spend some time with Josie's parents. Frantz then went on to Paris, where, through Francis Jeanson, he was

in the company of an impressive group of FLN sympathizers that included Claude Lanzmann, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir. He also had the company of relatives and longtime friends. His brother Joby and close friend Marcel Manville wanted him to stay. He could serve as an intellectual for the cause with this distinguished community. Fanon's response was typical of the man: "France has Sartre," he countered. "And France has Camus and Merleau-Ponty. They don't need me here. They need me in Tunis. And that's where I will go."³²

So Fanon returned under the name of Farés, through the auspice of Jean-son's networks, to North Africa, specifically Tunis, as a full-fledged member of the FLN. Josie and their son, Olivier, joined him shortly thereafter. The next three years of his life were marked by total dedication to the war of national liberation. He continued his training of recruits in warfare and techniques of resisting interrogation and torture. He also resumed his psychiatric practice, first through an antagonistic situation with a miserable set of colleagues at Razi Hospital in Manouba and then through the Neuropsychiatric Day Clinic, which he co-created, at Charles-Nicole Hospital in Tunis.³³ The day clinic was one of his many innovations during this period, and since he also had secured a writing assistant, Marie-Jeanne Manuellan, it was also a time of productive research and publishing.



Figure 3. Frantz Fanon with his hospital team in Tunis.

Tunis, in a way, was like a lab for Fanon's theories of psychotherapy. His argument, after all, was that therapy was contradictory under institutional structures of dehumanization. That the FLN was engaged in a revolutionary struggle meant that his patients were actively engaged in an evolving praxis of humanization, which encouraged his humanistic aims.

Fanon also worked with the editorial team of the FLN journal *Résistance Algérienne*, which was shortly afterward followed by *El Moudjahid* ("the Warrior"). He eventually served as a representative of the Gouvernement provisoire de la République algérienne (GPRA, Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria) in other parts of Africa. Some of his *El Moudjahid* writings are included in *Toward the African Revolution*, although, as Alice Cherki reminds us, Fanon was not the author of some of the pieces included in the collection, though his voice in the ones included is apparent. The editorial board insisted on anonymity of authorship in the spirit of the collective.

The importance of his efforts to forge alliances between the GPRA and other African nations—especially those south of the Sahara—cannot be overestimated. European colonization of Africa had brought, as well, criteria that separated North Africa *racially* from the rest of Africa. Arab hegemony and the legacies of colonization have maintained structural antiblack racism in North Africa from before Fanon's time to the present, although the status of the Arabic-speaking population there has many of the badges of being "colored."³⁴ The history of Arab presence in North Africa itself was an imperial one, a result of past Muslim empires or Caliphates where, too, there was the kidnapping of blacks (in addition to white Christians) into slavery.³⁵ A "Semitic" people, the Arab population and many of the indigenous and nonindigenous populations of the region—Semites and, in the old-style racial categories, "Negroes"—mixed to create the populations of Fanon's time. Fanon, from the standpoint of "black Africa," was defending a land from a set of colonizers, ultimately, in the name of previous colonizers.³⁶ For them, it was hypocritical for Algerians to seek solidarity with black Africans under the banner of African solidarity when, but for becoming a French colony, they (save, perhaps, some among the Berber and various "black," nomadic African minorities) would have identified with Europe and the Middle East. Fanon—a black man from Martinique—embodied an effort toward a new relationship of the North with sub-Saharan Africa at a time when people of the latter were making connections across the global black diaspora. He was for the most part very effective in this regard. He negotiated routes



Figure 4. Frantz Fanon delivering a speech on decolonization (probably in Accra).

through various countries to establish supply lines across the Sahara and worked out shipments of guns and medical supplies, though he wasn't able to come to an agreement with Mali over the southern border of Algeria as a front against the French. Serving as a delegate at the Pan-African Congress meeting in Accra in December 1958, he gave a public address and met with such African leaders as Kwame Nkrumah, Félix Moumié, and Patrice Lumumba.³⁷ He also lay groundwork for what he hoped would have been a union of workers and nations across the continent.³⁸

By 1959, Fanon began to devote attention to the impact the Algerian War was having on other colonial and postcolonial states in Africa. He participated in the Black Writers Conference, which took place in Rome from March 26 to April 1, in which he presented “Fondement réciproque de la culture nationale et des luttes de liberation” (“Reciprocal Foundations of National Culture and the Liberation Struggle”), a speech he would later revise as the fourth chapter of *The Damned of the Earth*.³⁹ It was becoming clear by then that the French were going to lose Algeria, which left them in a situation of calling for their own political legitimization. Even if they lost the war, the French had to show why the war had to have been waged. The result was heightened propaganda against Algeria and hyperrationalizations of French colonialism. Fanon's response, with the consent of the GPRA, was to write *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* (“Year V of the Algerian Revolution”; hereafter *Lv*), whose only English translation is titled *A Dying Colonialism*, a study of social transformation and revolutionary pedagogy. It's a work that

anticipates books such as Amílcar Cabral's *Revolution in New Guinea* (1970) and Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970; originally in Portuguese in 1968) and many of the studies in contemporary critical pedagogy. It is also one of Fanon's most controversial works, ironically because of his criticisms of white French feminists' interventions in Algeria.

The circumstances leading up to the publication of *L'an V* were the proverbial stuff of legend. In a fashion typical of the man, he was laying the foundations for a variety of projects simultaneously. These included not only experimenting on effective approaches to psychotherapy under strained circumstances but also imagining the kinds of political institutions needed to facilitate health across the African continent. These challenges required going further into his investigations on humanistic studies under exigent conditions. In the midst of all this was the continued conflict across various factions in the FLN, which resulted in cases of purging even loyal revolutionaries from the ranks. The situation became claustrophobic. Fanon's response was to delve deeper into his studies of the human dynamics at work, which led to increased exchanges with academics and artists passing through Tunis. Influential though many of these intellectuals may have been, it seems that Fanon made a greater impression on them than they on him. In some cases it was mutual admiration, as with Fanon's relationship with Giovanni Pirelli, the journalist who was at the time chronicling firsthand accounts of participants in liberation struggles. Although at first suspicious, Fanon eventually came on board as he saw the connection between Pirelli's work and his own larger intellectual project of understanding dynamics of social transformation. After facilitating some of Pirelli's projects, Fanon took it upon himself to write a full-scale study of the transformative potential of revolutionary action with the Algerian War as the case study. He completed a draft of the book, with the assistance of Marie-Jeanne Manuellan, in three months while continuing his many other duties.

One of those obligations almost cost him his life. There are many stories about what unfolded, but the facts come down to this: While engaged in one of his diplomatic missions, Fanon was in a serious accident. Some accounts are that his jeep was blown up. Others are that it fell in a ditch or simply went out of control. And there are still more. What is clear is that his spine was injured severely enough for his attending physicians to send him to Rome for physical therapy. There were several attempts on his life throughout these events, including the premature explosion of a vehicle that was to transport him to the airport for his flight to Rome, which led to his

taking extra precautions, including using a variety of pseudonyms when he traveled. The newspapers in Rome, however, reported that an important leader in the Algerian revolution was in hospital there, and they even included his room number. Armed assassins, highly likely from the Main Rouge (the Red Hand), a French secret service–organized terrorist group, showed up in the room and were disappointed by his absence.⁴⁰ He had secretly been moved to another room several hours earlier.

Returning to Tunis after his convalescence, Fanon made the final touches on *Year V of the Algerian Revolution* (hereafter “*Year V*”) and sent it to François Maspero for publication. Maspero, like Jeanson, was immediately impressed by the prose and the mind manifested in the text. He solicited Fanon’s countryman and earlier idol Césaire to write a foreword to the book, but the great poet and statesman refused. So did Albert Memmi, the famed author of *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Recalls Maspero:

I had approached Césaire, whose work I admired. By asking him, I had plunged him into a great panic, and it took him two months to inform me that he just couldn’t do it. Albert Memmi bowed out on the spot; what is more, he advised me to proceed with the greatest caution: “keep your distance,” he said.⁴¹

So Maspero had no recourse except to write the foreword to the first edition, as he wanted one to accompany the text.

The fears of Césaire and Memmi were no joke, whatever they may have actually thought about Fanon. It wasn’t because of paranoia that Fanon remained extra cautious about his activities for the rest of his short life. He often changed his travel plans at the last minute to circumvent efforts of the French secret service and various right-wing militants. There are reports of planes on which he had reservations being diverted to locations where he was either to have been arrested or assassinated. The French banned *Year V of the Algerian Revolution* shortly after its publication, confiscating various shipments of the book, but in each instance most of the copies were either sold or handed out gratis to prisoners across France and Francophone Africa. A classic of revolutionary social thought was born.

A striking feature of the secondary literature on Fanon’s study is that, with the rare exception of scholars such as Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, Alice Cherki, Nigel Gibson, Jane Anna Gordon, and Ato Sekyi-Otu, most of the engaged debates have been around the *facts* in the book instead of its main argument, and this has led to an additional level of metascholarship,

namely, the facts about the facts. The Algerian War is pretty much like Sartre's example, in volume 2 of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, of witnesses of a fight. Because the witnesses are also *participants*—that is, heavily invested individuals—the fight continues in a way that makes facts also contested terrain. This is not to say that there are no actual facts of the event. It's just that the facts are in a relationship of continued battle. It's similar to debates on racial issues in the United States: The levels of investments make it difficult for facts about racism to appear as such.⁴² As this book is about what Fanon said, interpreted as what he *argued*, the facts will here be left for their continued place of contestation except where they are the actual objects of his argument.⁴³

Fanon's argument, presented here as a case study, is foundational for his most known book, *The Damned of the Earth*. Although one's liberty, license, or absence of constraints could be handed over by another, it is the struggle for liberation that actually engenders one's freedom. Active involvement in such struggles is psychologically healthy. It overcomes various encumbrances, especially those imposed by a false sense of limits. The demand of being actional, first posed in *Black Skin, White Masks*, returns but with a radical admission of what Fanon had in mind, as he now relates in the introduction to *Year V*: "The effectiveness of the Algerian Revolution resides in the radical transformation already occurring in Algerians" (*Lv*, 14).

Fanon begins the work by criticizing the hypocrisy of French critics of the Revolution. As a revelation of hypocrisy, the text exemplifies a structural theme from his first monograph: the movement of internal and meta-thematic analysis. Thus when he writes about the unveiling of Algeria through French desire to conquer Algerian women, Fanon is also simultaneously doing such to the French critics who ultimately, he argues, should be ashamed of what rests beneath their political veils. The introduction points out such critics' general acceptance of ongoing use of torture in the maintenance of French colonial grip over the country while condemning the FLN as terrorists when they fight back without the use of "fair play" (*Lv*, 6). Yet Fanon concludes the introduction with rhetorical assurance to the rest of the world (and perhaps also to the Algerians facing internal conflicts):

This is not the replacement of barbarism with barbarism, a crushing of man through crushing other men. What we Algerians want is to discover the man behind the colonizer, this man, both officer and victim of a system that had stifled and reduced him to silence. As for us, we

have for months rehabilitated colonized Algerian man. We have torn Algerians from relentless, secular oppression. We stood up and are now moving on. Who could now return us to bondage? (*Lv*, 15)

These are powerful, inspiring words. One of the reasons I have decided to keep the literal title *Year V* is because Fanon was writing this as the war was coming to a close. He was full of hope, or at least faith, in the internal contradictions working themselves out. The text to come, *The Damned of the Earth*, will tell a different tale. But for now, goodwill is marked also by an additional consideration, for even if the unfolding events were not ideal, Fanon's basic point remained resolute: better to fight an imperfect revolution than to remain still, degraded, subservient, and colonized. The victory of dignity is already won in fighting for it.

Another Algerian, Jacques Derrida, inspired by phenomenological and psychoanalytical training, later argued, through his theory of deconstruction, that a methodological approach could have nearly endless manifestations of meanings.⁴⁴ Fanonian phenomenology here works through dimensions of Algerian society in conflict with French society through a methodological unveiling of illuminating and transformative failures, with the unveiling act itself as an object of metacritique. This means even the text's unveiling of an unveiling, a metamovement typical of Fanon's thought, raises the question of anxieties wrought by the conquerer facing the possibility of being or at least occupying, even temporarily, the place of the conquered. The study thus moves beyond descriptions to the lived experience of what is suffered through involvement in events, in, more plainly stated, history. We find here one among a later series of responses to Jean-Paul Sartre's portrait of Négritude: "While it is the white who created the *nègre*, it is the *nègre* who created Négritude" (*Lv*, 29). Colonization does not entail, in other words, a complete erasure of agency and creativity. Fanon takes this insight simultaneously inward and outward in the first chapter through an analysis of a central site of struggle between the colonizer and the colonized beyond material force and needs, weapons and bread—namely, the manifestations of a question through which Algerian society is placed on trial and France advances itself as a liberator: Algerian women.

A representation of benign colonialism is the moralistic claim of defending Algerian women from the backwardness of their men. Fanon addresses this theme of overcoming backwardness (premodernity) in each of the sub-

sequent chapters, which, seriatim, focus on technology, family, medicine, and minorities in Algerian social life.

The facts about the lives of Algerian women then and now have received ample treatment in the scholarly literature.⁴⁵ Whether Fanon's portrayal of the facts are accurate does not affect the main point of his analysis: How could liberating Algerian women be taken seriously when the approach to doing so is to impose a structure that makes the women (1) subordinate to all French and other European peoples and (2) only of value to the extent to which their plight could be used to maintain subordination of Algerian men and women?

Fanon unveils, as it were, the contradictions of the colonial position through discussing French colonizers' views on veiling. His analysis is at several levels simultaneously: political, psychoanalytical, phenomenological, and economic. The French, particularly French men, were frustrated by the presence of women who could see without being seen, at least in their flesh and face beneath clothing and veils. Thus although the conquerors were ordinarily in the relation of dictating the terms of sight, they were brought into a panic by at least the apparent subversion of that relationship in a subordinated woman who was able to construct a condition of how she was seen. This wrong needed to be set right, and the blame for it was placed on Algerian men. By making them the culprit behind this structure of reversed sadism, inscription of male-to-male relations was reasserted as the proper order, which makes the woman as agent disappear. The structure became white French men imagining themselves as fighting *for* those veiled women, who, if they had a voice, would supposedly prefer not to be veiled. The situation was exacerbated, however, through the addition of French women, whether Christian, Jewish, or secular, who walked without veils in plain sight. They collapsed into an order of presumed liberation in concert with the supposedly colonial liberator. (There were those among them who objected to this thesis, but they became part of the concluding analysis. It was, however, the complicit ones whom Fanon had in mind.) Together, they issued a rallying cry for Algerian women *so long as it was against Algerian men and for the sake of affirming colonization of Algeria*. Their tunes quickly changed, however, when unveiled Algerian women offered themselves to the fold.

One of the things Fanon is clear about is the role of sexual desire in colonial societies, as we saw in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Eros and conquest converge in a desired reenactment of the founding moment of the estab-

lished order. As a society premised on rape, colonial Algeria was marked by ritualized sexual violence in fact and at levels of fantasy. Thus white French settlers dreamed of ripping off the veils of Algerian women and penetrating them—in other words, in psychoanalytical terms, deflowering the country. This desire hardly went unnoticed by white French women, which created ambivalence around desire and violence. Unveiled Algerian women thus represented not only an achievement of this conquest but also, through their entering the realm of Westernization, akin to the previous discussion of black participation in colonial language, such women's presence represented a desire to be desired, which made them not only competition for white French men but also such with a bonus; they offered those men what, manifested in those women's representation of the nation, they wanted. I won't here rehearse the homosexual subtext that collapsed into a homophobic one of heightened violence against Algerian men, since we discussed that in terms of the *nègre* in our detailed treatment of *Black Skin, White Masks*. Let us just leave it at Fanon's argument, which was this: that the desire to rape Algeria threatened the narcissistic desire of white French women as desired desire, which meant, then, that their enemy became *the unveiled Algerian women*. We are in deep neurotic waters at this point. What French feminists failed to ask, Fanon averred, was about the terms on which Algerian women wished to relate to white French women and men. In the least, it should be without the weight of colonial control.

Fanon's social phenomenological diagnosis went further, however, and asked about the inner life of Algerian women in the midst of this struggle. Had French colonialism not derailed the historical process of social change in Algeria, it is not clear what may have unfolded. What was clear is that the meaning of the veil was enmeshed in the kind of cultural sedimentation, marked by limited options, which he called, in "Racism and Culture," zombification. Fanon was in effect asking: What does the veil *mean* to Algerian women? What is the lived reality of women for whom the veil was normative?

The problem was that the lab, so to speak, was Algerian society at war not only with the French but also with itself. Matters of exigency offered many surprises. The French presumption of the docility of Algerian women meant regarding them as veiled creatures without inner lives or points of view. For the FLN, this meant they were without suspicion when they crossed checkpoints with weapons and supplies beneath their heavily layered garments. Fanon, however, was concerned with what was going through those

women's minds when they did this. Such tasks carried enormous responsibility; what were they doing to these women? How were these women embodied in such actions? In phenomenology, as we have seen, the body is a relational, lived reality. Thus, in those new relations, those of participant and soldier in the war of liberation, what kind of Algerian woman was coming into being?⁴⁶

The French's discovery of veiled emissaries led to further complications. As veiled women became suspect, more credence was given to unveiled Algerian women at checkpoints. The FLN's solution was for their veiled members to unveil themselves, which enabled them to move past those points without detection. Fanon asked us to pay attention to the shifting grammar here. The passive voice in the expression "Algeria unveiled" is not identical with the active one of "Algeria unveiling itself." Feminists may debate whether it was these women unveiling themselves, since, as FLN members or in some instances wives of FLN recruits, they may have been given no option. That may be so. What is unlikely is that *all of them were so*. For those who were not forced except because of their anticolonial positions to participate in the struggle for national liberation, unveiling themselves posed similar problems to their sisters engaged in the same act: They experienced something new, of walking through the streets of Algeria without traditional garb. What, Fanon asks us to consider, did they embody in such actions? What did "Algerian woman" mean to those women in the FLN? What *kinds* of Algerian women did they become? We see here the movement that culminates in each of the chapters: Engagement in the struggle created new identities for the participants, and by extension Algerian society, to live.

A mistake of the FLN male leadership was the naïve belief that women could participate in such activities and simply return to their previous roles as the women they were. It is similar to the efforts that emerged in other countries, even conquering ones like the United States, where women participated in historically male work during World War II and then faced the governing forces attempting to put them back in their proverbial "place."⁴⁷ These were new kinds of women who made their way into the subsequent generations in the form of feminist movements. The anticolonial struggle would lead, inevitably, to new forms of struggle in the society, and the subsequent, violent efforts to stem the tide of growing numbers of new kinds of women in Algeria and the rest of the Global South reveal what Angela Davis in the United States and Assia Djebar in Algeria make clear: These women's fight for their freedom *as women* is an outgrowth of struggles against colo-

nization and slavery.⁴⁸ As we will see, the structure of this argument returns in Fanon's last work with prophetic force.

I have devoted more time to Fanon's discussion of the plight of Algerian women during the war of national liberation because it is not only the most controversial but also the one that outlines the movements of the rest. Prior to the war, Algerians, in almost Manichean opposition to French society, distrusted much of what their colonizers offered. The radio, for example, was a European technological intrusion. Since there was fascist-level control on news in the colony, updates on the war were appearing in metropolitan French newspapers. To be informed, then, one had to purchase a French instead of a local Arabic newspaper. This made suspect any Algerian who purchased a French newspaper. The response of the FLN was to create mobile radio stations to inform the people of what was happening on the various fronts. This, understandably, led to a surge in the purchase of transistor radios. Using such technology demystified their significance since they were now being used as instruments of national liberation instead of colonial imposition. The French authorities tried in vain to jam the airways of these rogue stations, but they kept coming through and were transformed into the eponym of the second chapter: "The Voice of Algeria."⁴⁹

At this point we have two transformed areas of embodied social relations: the visual and auditory manifestations of Algerian society. Fanon was, in effect, exploring the transformation of the national *body*. Correlated with the visual are sight and speech, and his next move is to the fundamental relational basis of social embodiment, of being brought into the social world: family life. Here, a variety of other considerations come into play, for the motif of embodiment raises the inevitable question of, at least in human terms, sex. Families are sites not only of the cultivation of norms but sexual reproduction or at least management of the results of such unions. The father in families active in the FLN faced doubled relations of authority and subordination since they were now part of a larger order of expectations and commitments. In cases where daughters were involved, pragmatics of sexual regulation came into play, and this affected, at least for a time, models of marriage and purity. Norms, in other words, were losing their sustainability in some cases, developing new possibilities in others.

Before going further, it should be clear that Fanon's fervor was taking over at this point, and clearly because of the pragmatic difficulties of *not revealing all because of matters of security*, Fanon was not divulging the many contentions posed by weeks, even months, in the field and the double vul-

nerabilities of daughters at war in the midst of men with old mores that could not be cast off overnight. I think, however, an appropriate conclusion from Fanon's discussion here is that the war stimulated *crises* in the sexual dynamics and hierarchical structure of Algerian families, and the response to those in an environment of renewed social agency means their outcomes were not concluded but instead in a process of working themselves out. We know this in the social range of Algerian women today, from the secularists to strict religious observers.

Fanon then took on his own professional tribe, as it were: physicians in Algeria. For reasons similar to those against technology, Algerians had an ambivalent relation to Western medicine. There were, as we saw with "The North African Syndrome," frustrating engagements with colonial physicians. The problem was that those were fundamentally asymmetrical relationships. Medical practice was clouded by physicians who came to Algeria for profit (many of whom also became farmers and landlords) more than for the practice of medicine, and for many of those who did otherwise, there was the absence of patients who knew the rules requiring their active participation in their convalescence. They expected the physicians *to fix* them as if by magic, and this was not an unreasonable expectation in a system that offered one group as gods over others. Recruits on the battlefields needed to learn and develop, however, a broad array of medical knowledge and skills, ranging from what to do and what not to do in cases of abdominal injuries to the production of pharmaceutical needs under exigent conditions. In other words, participating in the struggle of national liberation demystified modern medicine and cultivated a new Algerian relationship to it. Fanon's discussion of colonial physicians and psychiatric practice under colonial conditions revealed so many of their infelicities that he for a long time was *persona non grata*, as his friend from his medical school days at Lyon, Jacques Postel, relates: "When our colleague Frantz Fanon died, psychiatric journals remained silent. . . . The Fanon story was so outrageous that the psychiatrists sought to repress it altogether, so that people eventually forgot that Fanon was a psychiatrist."⁵⁰

The final sites of transformation were the various minorities, including the white French and other settlers. Since Fanon's case was built on participation, he asked, as he did with Algerian women, about what happened to white settlers who joined the struggle of national liberation. Returning to the white French women, what would happen to them if instead of defending colonialism as the liberator they joined the anticolonial struggle? Here

we see not only Fanon's faith in universal humanism at work but also an expression of his hopes for a postcolonial Algeria. He proffered a secularist, multiracial, and multiethnic society, and for him that required all making national welfare paramount. We see here an early instance of what is to come in Fanon's response to a problem of modern liberalism raised in the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: that of subordinating self-interest to a broader set of interests that are, upon reflection, everyone's deeper or more fundamentally reasoned set of interests, what Rousseau calls "the general will."⁵¹ As "the people" were here defined as all those who fought for the struggle, then the former settlers who participated should be accounted for in that formulation. Fanon argued that they in fact were changed people on the same basis as he argued that participation in the struggle established new relations of embodiment for Algerian women: Whites who were able to work in a struggle where they received orders from people of color or formerly colonized people were in a new set of relations. Although white of skin and European in origin, they were Algerian in constitution. Or so Fanon argued.

In truth, they varied. Some, who include Fanon's biographers, colleagues, and students, were staunch supporters of the struggle for Algerian independence. Fanon focused on Charles Géromini and Bresson Yvon. Géromini, a militant supporter of Algerian independence, was one of Fanon's interns who worked closely with him in the Neuropsychiatry Day Clinic in Tunis and with whom he composed a study of their efforts.⁵² The second was a former police officer transformed by the French atrocities he witnessed. He became an agent of the FLN, was caught, and when sentenced, declared: "I do not feel I have betrayed France. I am Algerian, and I, like all Algerians, fought and continue to fight colonialism. As an Algerian citizen of conscience, I took my place beside the patriots. That's what I did" (*Lv*, 171).

It is no accident, however, that Fanon chose two non-Jewish Frenchmen who joined the struggle. Many who actually volunteered and who were closely associated with him, such as Jacques Azoulay and Alice Cherki, were Jewish, which led to Fanon's being in constant battle against anti-Jewish sentiments in the ranks. These matters were already made more complicated by Israel's reprisal operations in the 1950s, the Suez Canal crisis of 1956, and the coalescence of anti-Israelism in the region. This was no doubt a "Catch-22" situation for Jews in the struggle; their presence fused them with the Arabs in the consciousness of anti-Semites who saw Jews and Muslims as a unity, but they faced Arabs (Muslim and Christian, even though there

were Arab Jews in this mix, though the term lost currency) who saw them as part of a different unity of Israel with the West.⁵³

Fanon's concluding, italicized paragraph reveals that, like Martin Luther King Jr., a young black man across the Atlantic who was only four years his junior, he, too had a dream:

Revolution, at its core, is truth, precisely because it changes man, renews and advances society. It is the oxygen that invents a new humanity. This, precisely, is the Algerian Revolution. (Lv, 174; italics in the original)

History, particularly on this last element, would have made a mockery of Fanon but for his leaving an additional testament on these matters. It was one that reached beyond the Algerian situation to the wider political implications of dehumanization to which he devoted his first major statement on and from the zone of nonbeing and serves as perhaps the most potent statement on the subject from the twentieth century and the concluding subject to which we now turn.

Counseling the Damned

I don't like men who hoard their resources.

—FRANTZ FANON

In 1960, Fanon, the thirty-five-year-old psychiatrist and veteran of World War II, twice decorated for valor, was appointed ambassador to Ghana for the GPRA (Gouvernement provisoire de la République algérienne). He had devoted the previous six years of his life to the struggle for independence and had, among many efforts at articulating the GPRA's international image, composed *Year V of the Algerian Revolution*. The world had changed much by then; it was clear that Algeria was on the eve of national independence, and in Fanon's native Caribbean, the revolutionary spirit had begun to take hold. The Cuban Revolution (1959) raised a considerable challenge to the Monroe Doctrine, an imperial declaration that established the United States's hegemonic control over the Caribbean and Latin America. Civil unrest soon followed in Martinique and Guadeloupe, events that Fanon celebrated in his January 1960 article "Le sang coule aux Antilles sous domination française" ("Blood Flows from the Antilles under French Domination").¹ According to David Cauter and Patrick Ehlen, these events signaled for Fanon the possibility of his participating in a growing revolu-

tionary movement in the Caribbean. He began to seek an appointment as the GPRA's ambassador to Cuba. Cuba was a logical choice, given the transformation of Martinique into an overseas department of France. Fanon, a wanted enemy of the French government, could not migrate to any island in the Caribbean save Cuba, since all the others were either overseas departments or allies of France. One could imagine what might have happened if Fanon's bidding were successful.

Alas, it wasn't to be. His petition to the GPRA was denied. Beyond that was, however, an additional, countervailing development. Fanon's arduous schedule of organizing supply routes for the Front de libération nationale (FLN), providing medical and military training to FLN members, writing responses to French propaganda (which included some FLN counter-propaganda), and participating in endless strategic meetings and internal squabbles began to take their inevitable toll. Fanon, the great revolutionary, looked tired.

Today, a popular photograph of Fanon appears on the covers of several volumes devoted to his life and thought and some of his own books, including the 1991 Gallimard paperback of *Les damnés de la terre*. The photograph is an enlarged version that enables his face to fill the frame (Figure 5).

The original photograph was at a distance, revealing Fanon as rarely seen, without a buttoned-up shirt and a tie (see Figure 6, where the image is reversed but actually placed at its proper angle).



Figure 5. Popular photograph of Frantz Fanon on various book covers.

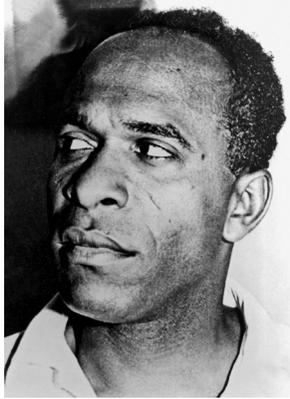


Figure 6. Popular photograph of Fanon, reversed.



Figure 7. Frantz Fanon with Roberto Holden and Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

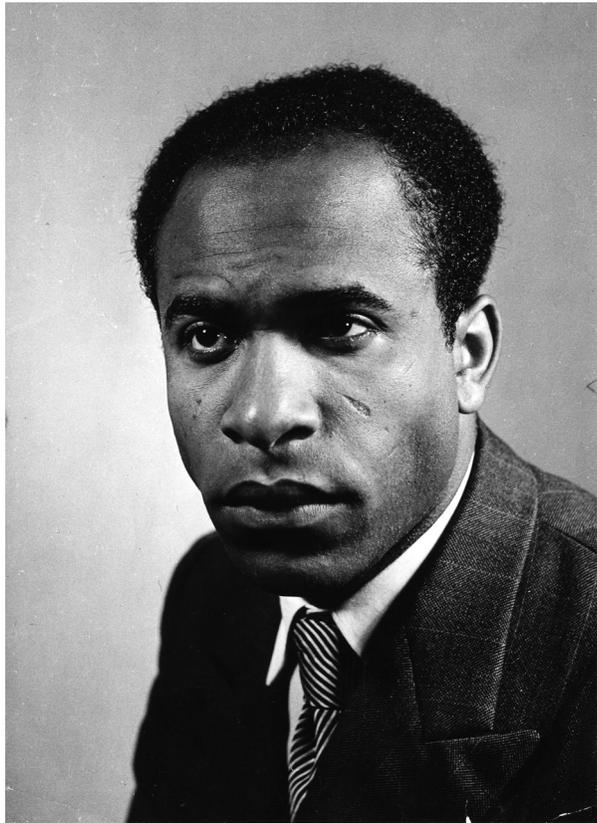
Shocking, however, is a still more revealing photograph of Fanon, apparently from the same meeting, seated on a chair, leaning to his right, his clothing loose, exposing an emaciated, anemic torso (see Figure 7).

It is a photograph of Fanon as he appears in no prior instance. In other photographs (Figures 8 and 9), Fanon is neat, often in a suit.²

But in Figures 5, 6, and 7, Fanon was unkempt, his hair disheveled, and in the distance, from the long-framed version of Figure 7, his posture sloped. The persistence of the reprinting of these photographs, which appear on the

covers of a variety of texts by and on him, is perhaps a function of contingent matters—for example, permission for its reprint is easily obtained from any Algerian embassy—yet it also presents an image that is at once powerful, iconoclastic, and *mortal*. The humanity of the man appears as an effort to struggle on in the face of his limitations. Looking to the side, he appears suspicious, and his slightly tightened jaws and narrowed eyes betray a moment of irritation, disdain, perhaps contempt.

Fanon, in that often reprinted photograph, is listening to something, something that has left him agitated in the midst of his ceaseless struggle, as he often put it, “to set man free.” On the cover of *Fanon: A Critical Reader* (1996), my co-editors and I included a quotation from one of his letters, placed at the lower left end of the photograph from a special issue on him in the review *Sans Frontière*: “*En tant qu’homme, je m’engage à affronter le*



Figures 8 and 9. Frantz Fanon as he ordinarily presented himself, in a suit and tie.



Figure 10. Cover of *Fanon: A Critical Reader*.

risque de l'anéantissement pour que deux ou trois vérités jettent sur le monde leur essentielle clartés" ("As a man, I have undertaken facing the risk of annihilation for the sake of shedding light on two or three truths about the world") (Figure 10).

Fanon spoke of annihilation and death. Yes, he didn't look well, and his comrades began to tell him so. It is no doubt that the doctor, in the end, is he who is most unwilling to consult the aid of a physician. Eventually, while traveling in Mali to secure supply routes for the GPRA, he fell ill and reluctantly inquired about his health.

The results? Granulocytic leukemia. In less specialized language, blood cancer.

Fanon was not surprised by the diagnosis. He had suspicions for some time, as he had already developed the habit of checking his blood from his year in Saint-Alban, and the periods of sudden fatigue caused him great concern. Although there are now great advancements in the treatment for leukemia, the best that could be done in Fanon's time was to sustain the patient through blood transfusions and doing one's best to keep him alive as long as possible. Near the end, the best thing was to alleviate the patient's suffering with pain-relieving drugs. What was Fanon to do? He was a notorious revolutionary and committed critic of European colonialism, but he needed medical attention beyond the resources of the FLN facilities in Tunisia. The first option was to seek medical attention in the Soviet Union,

a nation that supported the FLN. He visited there in December 1960, where he received treatment, but the prognosis—that he had a few months to live—was confirmed. He was advised to rest.

But, *seriously*. Fanon. Rest?

Fanon took the opportunity, afforded by his sick leave, to tour the Soviet Union's psychiatric facilities. He was greatly disappointed by what he found. Writes Bulhan, "The straitjackets, barred windows, and barren rooms in these institutions reminded him of Blida-Joinville Hospital when he had first arrived. His observations convinced him that genuine rehabilitation of troubled psyches awaited new discoveries."³

Fanon's remaining time turned out to be more than a few months—in fact, nearly a year. The Soviet physicians advised him to seek care at the National Institute for Health in Bethesda, Maryland, where the most advanced treatment was available for leukemia. Fanon's response has become legendary. He at first refused to seek aid in what he called "the nation of lynchers."⁴ His remark could be read in many ways. One obvious interpretation is based on his condemnation of American racism, which was well known for its brutality, as witnessed by the history of lynching and the violent response to the Civil Rights Movement, which was at that point receiving international attention. That he did not subscribe to the practice of comparative racism—whether, for example, U.S. antiblack racism was "worse" than France's and whether South Africa's was worse than both—suggests that he meant something else by his remark. Here is another interpretation. Fanon was a black man married to a white woman (albeit of Corsican and Gypsy descent).⁵ A rationale for lynching in the United States was not only claims of supposed black male predation of white women, but also violation of antimiscegenation laws, many of which were enacted after the overturning of segregation by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954.⁶ Sexual relations between blacks and whites were in 1961 sources of controversy.⁷ Worse, Bethesda was in Maryland, and Maryland, we should remember, is part of the American South. Segregation was the rule even in the District of Columbia, the nation's capital.

Upon his return to Tunis, he immediately set to work on several projects, including what turned out to be his final and most influential work, *The Damned of the Earth*, under the encouragement of Claude Lanzmann and Marcel Péju.⁸ He also hoped, as recounted by David Cauter, to produce a work on death and dying. He is reputed to have completed *The Damned of the Earth* in ten weeks. A work of intense prose rich with ground-level

political experience, phenomenological descriptions, broad historical scope, and theoretical precision with at times ice-cold dialectical logic, it is a classic in political thought and a masterpiece of political writing. To have achieved such a work at any age would be remarkable enough, but within ten weeks by a dying thirty-six-year-old revolutionary, aided by his wife Josie who, as with *Black Skin, White Masks*, typed and edited the narrated work, and with limited access to libraries and other research materials, this is a Promethean achievement, at the least.

The title of the work brings the connections between his text and *L'Internationale* (1871), the poem by Eugène Edine Pottier from which the French title *Les damnés de la terre* at first seems to have been drawn and which parallels, as we shall see, its conclusion. Observe the first line of the first stanza of Pottier's poem: "*Debout, les damnés de la terre*" ("Arise, damned of the earth!"), and the last four lines of the sixth:

C'est la lutte finale
Groupons-nous, et demain
L'Internationale
Sera le genre humain

It's the final struggle
 Let's gather, and tomorrow
 The International
 Will be humankind

Fanon's treatment is not imitation, however, but reassertion and reformulation through evocation (an ironically blues motif) since his version, especially in light of his disappointments with the claustrophobic, death-signifying dialecticism of Sartre's "Black Orpheus," transcends the reductionism of a proletariat-only politics. His intervention was mediated by thought on revolution in the African diasporic context, including the Haitian poet Jacques Roumain's adaptation, in a word, *blackening*, of Pottier's poem through a poem of his own, "*Sales nègres*" ("Dirty *nègres*"), in *Bois-d'ébène*, his book of verse.⁹ Roumain's formulation of the closing verses is reminiscent of Du Bois's reflections on the color line and is more attuned to the lived political reality of peoples of the Global South:

Il sera trop tard je vous dis
car jusqu'aux tam-tams auront appris le langage
de l'Internationale

car nous aurons choisi notre jour
le jour des sales nègres
des sales indiens
des sales hindous
des sales indo-chinois
des sales arabes
des sales malaise
des sales juifs
des sales prolétaires
Et nous voici debout
*Tous les damnés de la terre.*¹⁰

I tell you it will be too late
 as the tom-toms have learned the language
 of the International
 because we have chosen our day
 the day of dirty *nègres*
 dirty Indians
 dirty Hindus
 dirty Indo-Chinese
 dirty Arabs
 dirty Malaysians
 dirty Jews
 dirty proletarians
 And here we stand
 all the damned of the earth.

That Fanon evoked Pottier through Roumain is evident.

THE DAMNED OF THE EARTH

Although Fanon's powerful prose is present, *The Damned of the Earth* is at first a departure from the dual structure of tension between the theorist and metatheorist that marked most of his previous writings. In this work, there is the fused voice of both throughout. It's the voice of a revolutionary one would think of being twice his age.

The goal of colonialism, enslavement, and racism is, Fanon objects, an obscenity—namely, the production of happy slaves, people who celebrate their degradation. Dehumanized, such beings are “at home,” as it were, in

oppressive environments. Limit their options; close off the world; and they will simply attempt to live, if “living” is what one would call it, in the ensnarement of corporeal reach and “petrified” existence.¹¹ Choices, thought, dreams, deeds, all become inward, while for others, freed from this malediction, such concerns direct themselves to the world. He thus begins the text with a portrayal of violence offered by this grotesque expectation of the lives of colonized people. Recall Fanon’s analysis of self-other dynamics in racist contexts. Racism places a group of people beneath that relationship. Thus the relation of the self and the other, a relation through which ethical obligations come about, pertains to those already having human status in such a system. Antiracism, however, places blacks beneath that relationship. As neither self nor other, the effort of blacks to appear in such a system becomes its violation. They thus suffer from illicit appearance. It becomes useless, then, to expect those whose humanity has been barred from such a system to transform that system through its rules of legitimacy. Since they are termed illegitimate, anything that facilitates their appearance would be the same. The unhappy colonized or enslaved being is one who doesn’t accept his or her “place” in the system. Fanon therefore advances the provocative observation of decolonization as a Manichean and violent process that renders ridiculous the “Greco-Latin pedestal” (*Dt*, 77) of Western values, for if those values were instruments of colonization, how could they legitimate themselves as anything other than its salvation? What happens in a world of suspended values both old and new in a situation of imposed scarcity and poverty in the face of enormous wealth? Is it not the case that in a world without values, all *could be* permitted? And what more holds the possibility of violence than such a world, a world of poverty, wealth, dehumanization, and claims to the absence of limits?

These are questions posed in a way that requires addressing human beings directly, from, that is, the intersubjective relationship of inner life, of living inside the relations, of, in other words, the lived experience of a social world. To whom is Fanon posing these questions? To some extent, it is to everyone. To another, it is specifically to those who appear at first to be on the side of liberation struggles, of, as he tends to put it, setting man free. Colonialism in effect makes one group of people into gods and another into creatures beneath animals at worst and subhuman beings at best. Violence, he argues, has a cathartic effect of bringing the former down to size. This bringing down is an equalizing effect experienced by the colonized as a form of moving up. Channeling the Greco-Latin pedestal against itself, violence

against oppression is thus cleansing in the sense that Aristotle used the term *catharsis* in his discussion of tragic drama in his *Poetics* (1449b21–28).¹²

A hallmark of ancient Greek tragedy is that terrible things happen to good, even heroic, people. The humanity of demigods is brought to the fore through, as G. W. F. Hegel eventually argued, conflicts of “right,” circumstances where ethics and morals collide and break down. The human being, in other words, faces what Friedrich Nietzsche later describes as a *transvaluation of values*, that is, the realization of being responsible for values.¹³ This valuing of values, so to speak, comes down to the old adage of showing what one is made of, what one is ultimately about. It offers no guarantees beyond the act itself. Evoking Aristotle and Hegel is not accidental here. As Ato Sekyi-Otu argues, Fanon understood well that colonialism expressed an Aristotelian logic of contraries instead of a Hegelian dialectic of contradictions:

“Concerning violence” paraphrases Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and parodies his *Logic*. While it learns from Hegel’s narrative how to honor and to suspect the standpoint of immediate knowledge, it seems incongruously unwilling to assent to the logico-ontological propositions that in Hegel’s system authorize this strategic solicitude and this ultimate suspicion. For it is not only the Marxist version of dialectical reasoning which, according to the famous formulation, the text asks to be “slightly stretched”; it appears to go after Hegel himself. As when the young Marx, in a hilariously sardonic response to the mystifying reconciliations of Hegel’s “allegory” of mediation says, “Real extremes cannot be mediated precisely because they are real extremes. Nor do they require mediation, for they are opposed in essence. They have nothing in common, they do not need each other, they do not supplement each other,” so Fanon’s text here tells us that our most truthful witness to the colonial context, to the defining logic of the colonizer-colonized relation, is not Hegel but Aristotle.¹⁴

Hegel’s project in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we should remember, is the legitimation of modernity and progress. As a European portrait of modern humanity, what could it conclude when also from the bowels of Europe lived its own premodern logic in the colonies from which it drew material sustenance? The structure of the logical and prelogical, which, paradoxically, is a form of the logical, coexists, which raises the question of what it would mean for colonized people if the logic of contraries were eliminated in favor

of contradictions, especially since the Hegelian logic was in the paradox of its own contradictory relationship with reality in the colonial context. This is the parody of which Sekyi-Otu writes. It mirrors the failures of the human sciences in the colonial context in Fanon's inaugural work, and it brings to the fore Fanon's persistent reminder against reformist politics in colonial and racist societies: They fail to see that colonized and racialized subjects and their dominators need a decolonized, nonracist society in which to realize their humanity.

Aristotle's logic should here receive some qualifications, for it is the logic of his *Organon* at work here, which for him pertained to *formal theoretical reasoning* (that which cannot be otherwise) versus *practical reason* (that which can be otherwise). The good life, which involves ethics, politics, and poetics, is rooted in the latter. Hegel's *Logic*, however, sought complete overcoming, absolute integration, and elimination of this dichotomy. Connected to our earlier discussion of the human sciences, we could reformulate this tension as an admission of the incompleteness of reason versus an effort to yoke reason to the formal completeness of rationality. Could human beings live in the latter?

Fanon was thus not only addressing the colonized, the agent who previously stood frozen in fear and anguish before colonial gods. He was also addressing the critics of revolutionary violence, including those, such as Friedrich Engels, who seemed to support armed struggle. Why Engels? The Marxist revolutionary had offered, in his writings, a portrait of the state as not only a violent institution but also one formed by violence, the overcoming of which would be the end of enslavement and alienation.¹⁵ Fanon's objection to this view is that it addresses the problem from the *outside* in a neat rationalization of the matter. For Fanon, as we have seen, the human world is sloppy, full of contingencies, and even the meaning of human actions and relationships require a rich conception of social understanding, an, in other words, sociogenic interpretation.

Fanon also has an additional reason to be critical of Engels's position. Recall his critique of Sartre's application of a closed dialectic to the study of Négritude. Engels's argument is tantamount to forcing a closed science onto the human world. Take, for instance, his position on the state. Fanon's response is a classic example of black radical thought. Whites could speak against institutions that were instrumental for the organization of social life that enabled their brand of modern living. Although it is theirs to accept or reject, the fact of the matter is that applying their historical situation to

that of the people they exploited is fallacious. The people of underdeveloped and Third World countries stood in a very different situation than Europeans, white North Americans, South Americans, and white Australians. They weren't making decisions in the wake of having exploited the resources of those continents, alienated the labor of large masses of the population, and forced the people of those other continents into underdevelopment. As we will see, Fanon sees the task as not only that of building viable states, which would mean that the notion of the state itself as intrinsically violent may be irrelevant, but also, through his commitment to radical democracy, the possibility that the creativity of people could be such that the actual institutions they build could be radically different from any hitherto conceived.¹⁶ In other words, for Fanon, it is an open question of what states, especially modern ones, *could be*, which makes his critique of Engels ultimately against placing an a priori conception on a reality that is patently contingent: Engels, in other words, failed to realize that historical conditions aren't always the same. Nigel Gibson summarizes Fanon's point well when he writes:

The importance of subjectivity in Fanon's dialectic does not mean that Fanon operates under a romantic illusion that there will be an immediate understanding of complicated problems. For Fanon, as I have argued, dialectical praxis is something that has to be painstakingly worked through. There are no *a priori* answers and no easy solutions. Self-consciousness that breaks the bonds of Manichean thinking does not and cannot come about all at once. And the intellectual's role is not to mechanically impute consciousness, but to help destroy all the ideologies that see "the damned" as "out of order" and backward.¹⁷

As to what makes the project of social transformation legitimate for Fanon is the extent to which sovereignty is in the hands of the people, so, too, will be his view on the institutions they could build.¹⁸ Fanon here therefore takes on theorists who offer themselves as allies, as Sartre did with "Black Orpheus": Some forms of help, albeit revolutionary in one context, could be counterrevolutionary in another. Let's see how this unfolds in his actual analysis.

The colonial condition is, Fanon argues, one of competing claims divided by a Manichean (Aristotelian) structure of segregation and policed borders. The indigenous peoples see land around them that has been stolen or acquired through trickery and unjust wars. The settlers see themselves as simply going through legal transactions that give them the right to the land

they own. The stage is thus set for a conflict of “rights”—both with legal claims from different systems and shared moral claims against theft and unjust acquisition—that is no less than tragic: One side must lose. Colonialism’s victory would be continued violence; the colonized’s victory would be, to the colonial forces, violence incarnate. This is why Fanon argues that decolonization is a violent phenomenon: No side of the equation is without it. The situation is thus *tragic*. A critic could argue, however, that the issue is about the *means*, not the ends. Fanon’s reply is straightforward: The criteria that would constitute suitable means for the settlers, for the colonial government, would be the absence of challenges to it. This is because such a system does not see itself as unjustified and unjust, which means its overturn would be, from its perspective, unjust, unwarranted, a violation of decency and order—in a word, *violent*. Hence Fanon’s powerful, famous opening sentence: “National liberation, national renaissance, returning the nation to the people, the Commonwealth—whatever the rubric or new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon” (*Dt*, 65).

What critics of the first chapter of this work, “On Violence,” often fail to see is that Fanon is not arguing that violence is, in and of itself, revolutionary. He had no interest in valorizing violence, which he detested, as pointed out not only by Alice Cherki but also, ironically, by his former teacher and at times crushing island patriarch Aimé Césaire, who subsequently reflected that his thought was “without paradox . . . when seen as [addressing] the violence of justice, purity, intransigence . . . ; we must understand [that] his revolt was ethical and his approach motivated by generosity.”¹⁹ Fanon was offering his usual difficult dose of reality, though this time in the identification of ice-cold Aristotelian logic: Decolonial violence is simply what is manifested in, as he puts it, “the replacement of one ‘species’ of men by another ‘species’ of men” (*Dt*, 65).

Contraries, we should remember, are opposing sides of the same scope: “All” and “none” pertain to entire domains. Thus this painful process of replacement sweeps the entire society up into the pressures of limited options and forces especially those whose lives are in direct contact with the ongoing mechanisms of the system to reveal exceptions that introduce contradictions and, in Fanon’s words, “the truth.” Take, for example, the concrete manifestation of the colonial state in relation to the colonized: the police. Whereas the settlers regard the police as their protection, the colonized encounter them as their persecutors in a web of double standards bolstered by brutal force. The ensuing conflict means, then, that the status of “outlaw” falls

upon all but the colonialists, and the treachery of the state comes to the fore through its efforts to divide the illegals into those owned by the state versus those who are not. Contrary to the classical Marxist position, formulated in *The Communist Manifesto*, which sees the *lumpenproletariat* as “a dangerous class,” immoral refuse to be avoided at all costs, Fanon argues for the necessity of organizing them into a cohesive force in the struggle for national liberation.²⁰ As *necessary*, this is an example of Fanon’s argument about the subversion of ethics to politics: The “morality” of the *lumpenproletariat* becomes irrelevant.

Among the reasons for the collapse of ethics and morals are the standards set by Europe and its manifestations across the globe: the blood-soaked alienation of the natural resources and labor of people from the then Third World or underdeveloped countries—including their forced underdevelopment. And the Western nations have not paid for it. Reparations would actually be the consistent following through of their own values, which the Western nations refuse to honor simply by not recognizing the humanity of the people from whom they have stolen this wealth. So the presupposition of moral appeal is pointless. Fanon writes:

Europe is literally the creation of the Third World. The riches that choke her are that which was stolen from underdeveloped peoples. The ports of Holland, the docks of Bordeaux and Liverpool specialized in the slave trade, and owe their renown from millions of deported slaves. So when we hear a European head of state declare, with hand on his heart, that he must help poor underdeveloped peoples, we do not tremble with gratitude. Rather, we say, “It’s just reparations owed to us.” (*Dt*, 137)

Eliminating colonial occupation is not identical with achieving independence, however.

Fanon thus takes us into the world faced at the moment of avowed decolonization. His argument—that the absence of an infrastructure at the moment of victory, both at the level of land and idea, leads to a neocolonial situation through the affirmation of metropolises under auspices of Third World elites, a response to which necessitates revolutionary mobilization of the peasantry and the so-called *lumpenproletariat*—stimulated outcries of “heretical Marxism.”²¹ Peter Worsley, however, reads Fanon as also addressing the increased obsolescence of orthodox Marxist formulations. In stream with Fanon’s, along with a long line of Africana theorists, warning against squeezing people into preconceived categories instead of developing

concepts attuned to the lived reality of people, his response, though published in 1972, is remarkably prescient and applicable well into the twenty-first century with some small statistical and demographical adjustments; although lengthy, it warrants inclusion here:

It is high time that they [orthodox Marxists] stopped looking at the twentieth century through nineteenth-century eyes. For one of the major features of the contemporary Third World is the explosive growth of urban populations composed of immigrants from the countryside and the smaller towns who are not established proletarians either in terms of occupation—since they live in a chronic state of unemployment or under-employment—or of political culture, since they have not absorbed the life-style and mentality of established urban workers. Countries like India and China are indeed overwhelmingly peasant societies. But in Argentina, Chile, Venezuela and Uruguay, 40 per cent and more of the population live in towns or cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants. Some cities even have substantial developed industry: Johannesburg or São Paulo. But most of them are incapable of absorbing the growing populations into productive employment, for they are under-industrialized cities. The cities of the Old World grew equally explosively during successive Industrial Revolutions. In the long run, they were able to absorb these new populations because they were expanding economies, whatever their ups and downs.

The new Third World cities cannot cope with the human flood, except where ruthless controls are operated to keep the inflow in line with the requirement for urban labour. Thus in Johannesburg, despite the rhetoric of *apartheid* and the Bantustan policy, the African population expanded by half a million in the 1950s. Every year, thousands of new recruits flock to the *favelas*, *barriadas*, *bidonvilles*, shanty-towns or whatever the local name is for the universal phenomenon of life in encampments made out of cardboard, flattened petrol-tins, and old packing-cases. Whatever term we use to describe this social category it is high time to abandon the highly insulting, inaccurate and analytically befogging Marxist term *lumpenproletariat* which is so commonly used. “Underclass” or “subproletariat” would seem much more apt characterizations of these victims of “urbanization without industrialization”: the central attribute that distinguishes Manila, Rio, Saigon, Cairo, Bangkok, the cities of the Third World, from those of developed countries. For

these people are at the bottom of the heap. In comparison, the established industrial proletariat, where it exists, is relatively privileged and secure as Fanon pointed out. Hence the immigrants constitute a stratum beneath those who may only have their labour-power to sell, but do at least succeed in selling it. We could almost speak of the “non-working classes,” a phrase which carried the dual implication of social proximity to their closest reference-group, their successful neighbours who have made the working class, but which at the time emphasizes the important social distance between them—“property” in jobs.²²

An increasing number of people face a world in which they must make decisions in circumstances of ever-decreasing options available for the proverbial good life. They exemplify Fanon’s lamentation of having arrived too late unless they take a path of transforming the kinds of options available to them and, as a consequence, the scarcity of options as well. The theme of “problem people” and the need to transform social relations through which their actions could become meaningful, to enable them to be, in a word, “actional,” returns. Worsley’s reflection is on point in Fanonian terms because it identifies the problem of decadent and fetishized human science and the effect it has on the human capacity to imagine and enact possibility. Fanon, in other words, was taking these challenges into account in his analysis of the situation of people in the then Third World countries during the process of and immediately after their avowed independence. He was well aware of how unprecedentedly high were the stakes. Having built his thought on the importance of seizing freedom and taking responsibility for one’s values, Fanon is careful to raise the question of *how* a transition could be made from neocolonialism to a genuine *post*colonialism instead of, as Achille Mbembe has observed, the emergence of a “postcolony,” that is, a legally independent entity with all the sociological and material trappings of a colony.²³

In his third chapter, “Mésaventures de la conscience nationale” (“Misadventures of National Consciousness”), he in effect continues his meditations on Négritude, for instance, on the grounds that in this instance it is more than a negative moment in a historical dialectic because of the misapplication it engenders through nationalism, racism, and all self-*interest*-laden models of group organizations instead of those premised on the common good. Here Fanon is making concrete the old problem of participatory democracy, where policy could be premised on a collective of interests or the interest of the collective or, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau famously formulated

it in *The Social Contract*, between the will in general and the general will.²⁴ The will in general involves individual interests as participants' primary objectives. The general will transcends individual interests and focuses on what is reflectively right for all, which comes back to the individual as a member of the larger polity. The distinction could be further understood in terms of another one that has been a subtext of our readings of Fanon's work, namely, between license, liberty, and wants on one hand and freedom, responsibility, and agency on the other. Fanon provides case studies of nationalisms collapsed into ethnic conflicts, and he offers, in their stead, the option of "national consciousness," where the task, as he formulates it, is to build the nation. As the world in which he is arguing is one dominated by European modernity, this means thinking through, as we have already seen, alternative models of modern states and civil societies. Here, he identifies several problems wrought from processes of decolonization.

The first is a consequence of the custodians of the newly independent nation often turning away from the challenge of building the new nation, sorely in need of well-functioning state apparatuses, in favor of their private interests. They prioritize, in other words, their wills in general over the general will. Why does this occur? Fanon has an almost mythical analysis of this process, which I shall call the Moses syndrome. His approach is summarized in his powerful dictum: "Each generation must, in relative opacity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it" (*Dt*, 253). Fanon argues that the generation who takes on the mission of decolonization is not necessarily best suited for the next stage of liberation. As the fighters for national liberation are nourished on that unique struggle, they often maintain their legitimacy in those terms, and the result becomes an almost perpetual renegotiating of colonial relations in the form of neocolonial ones. An often-overlooked aspect of Fanon's argument is its similarity to that of E. Franklin Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie*, a work first published in French, which was no doubt discussed at the Black Writers' Congress that Fanon attended at the Sorbonne in 1956.²⁵ Frazier, a sociologist at the University of Chicago, had argued that although there was a black middle class in the United States, it was premised on the service economy and the negotiation of race relations. Their "capital" was, in other words, purely political and cultural. Lacking material capital, they weren't able to build or transform the material conditions of black people in general and thus functioned more like the correlate of the so-called *lumpenproletariat* to the working class—that is, as a form of "*lumpenbourgeoisie*." Fanon adopts this argument in his examination of what happens in the pe-

riod succeeding formal independence. The diagnosis is moribund: "The national bourgeoisie discovers its historic mission: to serve as an intermediary" (*Dt*, 193). This bourgeoisie often includes the leadership who fought for the liberation of the nation and who now face a form of legitimacy so embedded in the struggle that they are often caught in a web of negotiations the consequence of which is the maintenance of colonial relations in the heroic face of the liberators. They become an obstacle to national interests.²⁶

Fanon, however, has an additional argument. Although he shows that this bourgeoisie must be opposed because they are good for nothing, and thus parasitic, the complicated question is what should the younger generation do as they, too, were at least affected by the process of decolonization. The discussion here takes Fanon into psychological terrain, as he raises some difficult questions with regard to the leadership and the population affected by the process of violent transformation. Fanon is not here thinking of the analytical logic and structure of violence, with which he opened the text, but instead of the *traumatic effects* of brutal force. The destabilization of norms leads to acts of brutality in an effort to equalize the value of life. Thus Fanon recounts the traumatic guilt of an FLN soldier who killed a woman in an attempt to balance the same done to his mother; he offers the case of Arab boys who killed their close friend, a white French boy, as an assertion of their agency in an environment of nihilistic disregard for Arab life. A curious aspect of these case studies near the end of the book is their purpose. Propaganda is hardly served by adding accounts of these disturbing incidents. What could Fanon have been up to in relating them to the reader?

At this point, Fanon wants to make it clear that he is not offering a romantic portrait of colonialism and the struggle against it. Colonialism, as we have seen him stress throughout his writings, is a system of ongoing violence. History has proven him to be correct in his conviction. As a recent commentator on French colonization, which could pretty much be a description of what happened throughout all the European colonies, put it:

The underlying framework that defines France's relationship with Algeria is one of violence, a violence central to the Franco-Algerian colonial experience from its inception in 1830 to its close in 1962. The violence of the colonial period, whether of conquest, settlement, or expropriation, forcibly reshaped collective and individual identities, and in the process memory and nostalgia assumed historical significance. Violence became part of the "system" and was incorporated into the social structure of

colonial society in racist discourses and repressive practices. The colony's population, therefore, was marked by this presence, which constantly undermined the possibility of equitable relations between the French and the Algerians.²⁷

The system produces monsters, but Fanon's sobriety emerges from his admitting and demonstrating that even its overcoming is monstrous.²⁸ To understand this, we should consider the etymology of the word "monster." From the Latin *monstrum*, which, in the infinitive is *monere*, it originally meant to show or to demonstrate. Monsters are symptomatic of something gone awry.²⁹ Their appearance reminds us of what must be overcome, and embodying the monster in acts of overcoming is a form of warning of additional stages of transformation to come. As a system of values must also be transformed, because they produce the kinds of people who maintain colonial relations, Fanon takes on the presuppositions of theoretical absoluteness that governed social transformation in his times. This included, as his relationship with Sartre and his rejection of Engels revealed, orthodox Marxism. This was the view that revolution was a science of inevitable struggles whose conditions of possibility were born of the tension between owners of the means of production and industrial laborers. Such a model privileged the urban and technologically dominant centers of Europe and in effect left the people of the then-called Third World to tolerate much as they awaited their modernization through which to enter revolution and become part of history. Fanon's response is akin to much of what could be called the black radical tradition: The error in that conception of revolution is that it treats colonialism and racism as minor terms. It fails to address the specificity of the colonies and mercantile capitalism, in which the people of the colonies were treated as sources of raw material into which to mix the labor of the workers in the metropolises. What, however, if colonized peoples cannot wait? Would it be correct to describe the demise of colonialism as a form of social transformation but not *revolutionary social transformation*?

Addressing this question places Fanon in the company of W. E. B. Du Bois and C. L. R. James, both of whom articulated conceptions of revolution premised on the struggles of the racialized and enslaved. Their position ironically comes down to the Martin Luther King Jr. formulation in his letter from the Birmingham jail to Christian leaders: "Why We Can't Wait."³⁰ There is, in other words, a double standard: Blacks are always counseled to wait when whites never had to. Conditions of possibility do not

occur by themselves; they come about through the action of people. It's a reminder of Fanon's remark from *Black Skin, White Masks*: "But Society, unlike biochemical processes, cannot escape human influence. Man is that by which Society comes into being" (*Pn*, 8–9). Rejecting the closed dialectical model that requires the cultivation of a modern bourgeoisie with an opposing proletariat as necessary and sufficient—indeed, *the only*—conditions for revolution, these other black revolutionary theorists and Fanon regard the matter as an open question linked to the unique conditions of struggles at hand. Thus, if the fundamental condition of dehumanization is slavery, then revolution must be rooted in the transformation of that system; if it is racism linked to labor, that is, racialized servitude, then overcoming racism requires doing the same; and the colonial condition Fanon was analyzing was a convergence of all of these with the addition of the largest group in the colonies under formalized postslavery being peasants in countries governed by large rural regions and unemployed people relying on illicit economies in urban centers devoid of sufficient jobs to employ them, namely, the *lumpenproletariat*.

In the course of his critique of neocolonial values and how they create the postcolony, Fanon advanced both a geopolitical and a class critique. The geopolitical critique challenged the necessity of the capital city as the site of political residence and the organization of social life. The modern African city, for example, faces the reality of the complex political demands of rural Africa. The urban elite that emerges in this structure, he argues, lacks material capital but relies on political capital as mediators with colonial metropolises. The result is a neglected infrastructure, mismanaged national loans, catastrophic unemployment, and the emergence of, returning to Frazier, a "*lumpen-bourgeoisie*," a "useless" elite (*Dt*, 217). The presumed necessity of such a structure must then be based on cultural and historical bindings that take hold of the people, what the innovative Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci called *hegemony*, which is a form of

"spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production [and] . . . state coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however,

constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed.³¹

Marked by commitments enabling the dominating group or leader's legitimacy, hegemonic relations could be established even where the actual interests of the people have fallen by the wayside. Thus in his discussion of what he calls *organic intellectuals*, Gramsci raises the question of the ultimate interests served by dominant groups or those to whom legitimacy has been ascribed. It is possible for a group of intellectuals, leaders, or parties to be organically linked to a set of interests antithetical to the people over whom they are hegemonic.³² Challenging classical Marxism, Fanon in similar fashion argues that the other groups, the peasants and the so-called *lumpenproletariat*, along with the proletariat, must come into play in the project of building the nation because the dominant one has a symbiotic relationship with other interests.

An abstraction that guides much revolutionary thought is "the people." As Fanon's analysis focuses on those of what were then the Third World and underdeveloped countries, the people were invariably of color. The subjects to be liberated, to be transformed, and the conditions by which they are bound as groups needed to be clarified. The chapter titled "Sur la culture nationale" ("On National Culture") addresses this question in an analysis that brings Fanon back to Négritude. A lived problem that different groups of blacks face when brought together under the banner of Négritude is that aside from being under the crushing heels of antiblack racism (that is, a world in which they all become "niggers"), their cultural particularities are markedly different. This observation pertains not only to the hybridized blacks, whose double consciousness is a manifestation of what it means to be black *and* some European national identity but also across the many indigenous groups of Africa, where there could be a form of tripling or even quadrupling of the self in terms of, say, black (racial), Igbo (ethnic), Nigerian (national), and British (national), and all these collapse, under Négritude, in terms of a presumed racialized whole: African. Fanon regards all this as delusional (*Dt*, 259–63). Legitimacy doesn't emerge from the proof of cultural heritage or racial authenticity; it emerges, he argues, from active engagement in struggles for social transformation and building institutions and ideas that nourish and liberate the formerly colonized (*Dt*, 269). Thus: "The problem is to know the place these [artists, intellectuals, political leaders] intend to give their people, the type of social relations they decide to

create, and the designs they have for the future of humanity. This is what counts. All the rest is fiction and mystification” (*Dt*, 282). He then offers what “looks paradoxical”:

In a colonized country, the most elementary nationalism, the most brutal, the most undifferentiated, is the most fervent and effective means of defending national culture. . . . In the colonial situation, culture, deprived of the double support of the nation and the state, withers away and dies. The condition for its existence is national liberation and the renaissance of the state. (*Dt*, 292–93)

Fanon admits the value of national culture as a source of coherence for the constitution of “the people.” But he adds that this must be a living form of cultural resistance that avoids what he had earlier described in “Racism and Culture” as zombification and now calls “petrification”: Premised on praxis, this form of cultural production must offer its own demystification, similar to the moments of transformation he illustrated in *Year V of the Algerian Revolution*. It must be cultural production that looks to the future, which makes it paradoxically a challenge to its own permanence. This is a complicated argument premised on a fundamental aspect of Fanon’s philosophical anthropology: The human being is, for him, a relational reality, which means that genuinely human activity always reaches beyond itself. He thus concludes:

Self-consciousness is not the closing off of communication. Philosophical reflection teaches us, on the contrary, that it is its guarantee. National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will bring about an international dimension. (*Dt*, 295–96)³³

Fanon then returns to the colonial and decolonizing moments to illustrate a chilling point. The colonial condition forces the colonized, he argues, to question their humanity. Consider the contrast with domination versus oppression: “Under the German occupation, the French remained men; under the French occupation, the Germans remained men” (*Dt*, 300). But colonized subjects, governed by mechanisms of racial degradation, are not such. “Because it is a systematic negation of the other, a determined decision to refuse to the other all the attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves constantly the question: ‘In reality, who am I?’” (*Dt*, 300).

Given his argument about the zone of nonbeing, of being beneath even

the self–other relation, this question can be reformulated more precisely as, “*What am I?*” This interrogation occasions alienation of the spirit in the face of loss of land and thwarted indigenous teleological processes such as their own forms of self-critique. The decolonization process unleashes an array of violent forces that bring to the surface the many double standards of the colonial system and contingency in a world that once seemed to be absolute and necessary. At the heart of this “hell” is the classic direction of consumed hatred. Dante’s *Inferno*, an appropriate allegory of damnation, returns. As Virgil eventually shows Dante’s protagonist two foes, one of whom is so consumed by hatred that he gnaws on the head of his enemy while frozen from the neck down at the icy cold epicenter of Hell, Fanon presents the horrific implications of being consumed by hatred. Recall that there are some attachments, values, of which we must let go, and in so doing, we will find our way outside, where we could emerge, in the words of Dante, “to see—once more—the stars.”³⁴ This is what Fanon ultimately means when he implores us all, at the end, to “For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, make a new start [*faire peau neuve*—literally, “grow new skin”], develop a new thought, and try to inaugurate a new humanity” (*Dt*, 376).

Fanon’s concluding plea raises many questions, among which are the relationship of concepts to the formation of material reality and the role of values in their formation—that is, their normative potential. Recall in our discussion of Franz Boas that primitivism doesn’t work because of the fallacy of temporal displacement—the notion, that is, that some groups of people belong to an earlier time. The Eurocentrism of the values debate is similarly fallacious. Drawing on our earlier discussions of concepts ranging from theodicy and potentiated double consciousness to creolization, we could consider a hitherto unconsidered possibility from Fanon’s conclusion. Potentiated double consciousness addresses the false universal claims of hegemonic societies and their dominating groups. Their particularity is hidden in the guise of their avowed universality. Seeing possibilities beyond such claims relativizes their terms through reaching beyond them. They are, in other words, teleologically suspended by a subordinated set of terms that admit their limits. Identifying the avowedly universal as an idol reveals a theodicean structure by which godlike status is achieved, hegemonically, through a suppression of reality. Demonstrating this falseness expands the normative universe or, better, pluriverse. It also brings together terms that the system attempted to keep apart. This fusion is a creolization at the level of knowledge that acknowledges the underlying reality of culture and prac-

ticed values. The result is a critique of a prevailing presumption of colonial and even postcolonial thought—namely, that of premodern (read “traditional”) versus modern (read “universal”) norms.

Exposed here is a recurring fallacy, namely, that colonized people ended their production of values at the moments of conquest and colonization. The presumption is of a form of normative coma out of which colonized subjects are awakened at the moment of independence. Fanon’s relational philosophical anthropology suggests, however, that colonization inaugurates a new context out of which new values, those regarding the colonial situation and its transcendence, emerge. That the colonizing group often sees their values in ahistorical terms—as eternal, permanent, without dynamism—is not accidental, for the effort at preserving power is mapped onto the future and thus across time. The colonized, however, long for change, which means the future for them fails if it is like the present, which means the assessment of the colonial moment is one of profound injustice and lack. The latter is, then, very much modern. Their normative theories are, in other words, attuned to the actual world in which the colonized and colonizing subjects live. That is the modern world. Although the specific words of the supposedly premodern moment may persist, their meaning is advanced in a peculiarly modern set of relations. The result is that whatever the Swahili term *uhuru* and the Nguni one *ubuntu* used to mean, they have been transformed through the unique historical situation to which they have been applied over the past several hundred years to make sense of what was happening to the communities in which they were originally articulated. The result, then, is a question of decolonization and transformation *at the normative level*, as Fanon hinted in his critique of Greco-Latinism. Not only are new concepts being formed in the Global South but also possibly new norms. As the human condition is now that of global compression, where eight billion human beings are testing the sustainability of natural resources, where the economic conditions of living for most human beings, namely, jobs, as Worsley showed, are governed by conditions of provoked scarcity, and as the very meaning of being human is tested and challenged on every level from gender to race to sexuality to technological hybridization, it is thought that has admitted the failure of previous norms to address the historical situations that are proverbially ahead of the game. The addendum to Fanon’s closing remark raises questions of humanity’s normative reach beyond, even, justice.

Theorists taking up this challenge today are sometimes mistakenly placed

under the rubric of “theory from the Global South.” Fanon would find this unacceptable, since the point of his argument is not one of a reciprocal relativism. Such theorists are actually reaching for more *universalizing* practices. Although not *the* universal, because of the fundamental incompleteness at the heart of being human, the paradox of reaching beyond particularity is the simultaneous humility of understanding the expanse and possibility of reality and human potential. The present participle *building* new concepts and norms in a fusion of concept-norms or normative concepts is a legacy of *The Damned of the Earth*.³⁵

FACING SARTRE

After completing the manuscript, Fanon gave it to Lanzmann to share with Sartre to see if he would write its foreword. Fanon’s fame (and infamy) by this time was such that he did not need Sartre’s endorsement for promotion of the book. *Year V of the Algerian Revolution*, after all, was enormously successful. Was the invitation to Sartre akin to Capécia’s and Veneuse’s quest or need for legitimation through the authoritative force of written words from, in this case, an eminent white man?

Speculation varies on why he invited Sartre to take on this responsibility. One consideration was that he was impressed by Sartre’s devotion of more than seventy pages of his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* to the racism of French colonialism in Algeria and the terror exemplified by French efforts to maintain colonial rule there.³⁶ But that by itself did not warrant the invitation. A statement of affinity and agreement would have sufficed. Here is another possibility. Recall that in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon had accused Sartre of guiding in a Trojan Horse to black semiotic and psychic resistance by pointing out in “Black Orpheus” that Négritude was an antiracist racism that was revolutionizing black consciousness as a negative moment of a dialectic in which the “universal” proletariat of Marxism would emerge through a cross-racial coalition of black, brown, and white workers. This position, argued one recent critic, inaugurated a uniquely *Sartrean* brand of Négritude.³⁷ The Reality Principle of this revolutionary position turned out, again, to be White Reason. As we saw in our discussion of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon regarded this supervening assertion of whiteness as a form of death, through which Sartre served as an exemplar to be faced. Yet Fanon also admired Sartre, whose open position on the Algerian War, a position that endangered his life in France as the bombings of two of his apartments

attest, redeemed him politically in Fanon's eyes. But more, Fanon was not a black separatist. He sought a multiracial postcolonial project. The FLN faction to which Fanon belonged was at least more disposed to secularism, which enabled its members to share his multiracial hopes for Algeria. What better demonstration of his antiracism not being a form of racism than to present the work on violence, counterviolence, and the need to forge a new humanity in partnership with the most eminent *white* intellectual supporter of anticolonial struggles at the time? Fanon by himself represented critique and creativity, but with Sartre, there was demonstrated hope of such a post-colonial future.

There is, however, a third possibility. Fanon also had good reason to respect Sartre without collapsing into the psychoanalytically desperate quest for authorization from a white father. Francis Jeanson was a close associate of Sartre. There is no way Jeanson would have published *Black Skin, White Masks* without sending a copy to Sartre, who, unlike many other famous French senior white intellectuals, approached the writings of younger intellectuals, including those of color, much like jazz musicians of his age, who treated younger musicians as equals or with the full potential to match or outdo their performance. Scholarship on Sartre during those years tends to offer this narrative: Completing *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre moved on to write his promised ethics. He prepared his *Notebooks for an Ethics* but eventually abandoned it as he was moved by the historical events of the Cold War and became increasingly disillusioned with Marxism as represented by the Soviet Union. Invited to speak in Poland in 1952, he eventually began to rethink Marxism through the long article, "A Question of Method," published in an early formulation as "Marxism and Existentialism" in the Polish journal *Twórczość* (1957) and then under the name for which it is most known in *Les Temps Modernes* later that year. These reflections culminated in the first volume of his tome *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960). This narrative fits neatly with that of a very white-centered and Eurocentric Sartre. The Sartre I have studied, however, was an intellectual who would have taken seriously Fanon's dismay about and objections to "Black Orpheus" in chapter 5 of *Black Skin, White Masks*. It would have alarmed him that his evocation of the Marxist dialectic, steeped in the Hegelian readings he developed in his *Notebooks for an Ethics*, had humiliated the freedom of blacks, the enslaved among whom he had devoted considerable study, and offered them the proverbial gift of death.³⁸ Fanon's critique raised the dangers of closed dialectical reasoning, and in fact Sartre's meditations from 1952 on-

ward were about developing a genuinely open, that is dialectical, form of dialectical thought. In other words, *the* dialectic wasn't revealing itself to be dialectical. The culmination of these studies is based on this thesis. Couldn't it have been the case, then, that Fanon had affected Sartre in a way that Beauvoir through Wright influenced Fanon? And couldn't it also have been the case that Fanon noticed Sartre's changed perspective and its possible source? If I am correct, then Sartre's ability to rethink his position on the basis of what was offered by the younger intellectual would have stimulated enormous respect from the latter. Although this speculation subverts the argument that Fanon was in search of legitimacy, where Sartre's job would be *to authenticate* Fanon, it does not eliminate the question of Fanon's seeking an unnecessary foreword to his text. The answer to this second concern rests, as we will see, in what Sartre actually writes.

The first chapter, "On Violence," was published in *Les Temps Modernes*, the editorial collective that at the time included Sartre, Beauvoir, and several other influential midcentury French intellectuals. Agreeing to write the foreword, Sartre along with Beauvoir met Fanon in Rome in summer 1961, where Sartre and Beauvoir were on vacation and Fanon was passing through en route to northern Italy for treatment for rheumatism caused by his leukemia. In his influential biography of Sartre, Ronald Hayman describes their meeting as follows:

Fanon came to Rome, although, two years earlier, when he was in a hospital there, he had escaped only just in time when an assassin found the way to his room. After he and Sartre had lunch together, the conversation went on until two in the morning, and when De Beauvoir pleaded that Sartre needed sleep, Fanon's response was: "I don't like men who hoard their resources." He told Lanzmann: "I'd give twenty thousand francs a day if I could talk to Sartre from morning till night for two weeks." As it was, they talked almost nonstop for three days. In the Algerian war, Fanon, who had been supplying the guerrillas with drugs, had trained terrorists in how to resist torture and how to keep calm when planting bombs or throwing grenades. According to De Beauvoir, Fanon's face would express less anguish when he described the "counter-violence" of the blacks and the vengeance of the Algerians than when he spoke of Congolese mutilated by Belgians or Angolans by Portuguese—faces battered to flatness, lips pierced and padlocked. He accused Sartre of not doing enough to expiate the crime of being French: how could he

go on trying to live normally? The two men talked again when Fanon came back to Rome, ten days later, on his way to Tunis, but this was to be their last meeting. . . . As soon as he left Rome, Sartre started on the [foreword], writing less feverishly than during the early summer in Paris. "I am recomposing myself," he said.³⁹

While Sartre was recomposing himself, Fanon returned to Tunis to continue his efforts on behalf of the Algerian struggle for national liberation, which he analyzed in the context of the broader quest for the international liberation of humankind. Sartre wrote the foreword, which, as with "Black Orpheus," became a source of controversy on its own terms. In some instances, critics of *The Damned of the Earth*, most notable of whom was Hannah Arendt, were actually arguing against Sartre, who they thought was simply offering a faithful interpretation of Fanon's position.⁴⁰ Such critics would have done much service by reading the rest of the book. What they missed was that Sartre didn't regard authentication and interpretation as his mission. Sartre was speaking his own mind, inspired by his own work on violence in his *Critique*, his activism, which included devoting his intellectual energy to the efforts of the newly independent countries across the then Third World, and his dramatic encounter with Fanon. His opening remark makes this clear, as he attempted, with the full force of his rhetorical power, to pull the rug from under the presumption of authoritative perspective and moral high ground expected by those who chose to read *him*, Sartre, as the hegemonic voice of legitimacy-granting White Reason:

For not so long, the earth had two billion people: five hundred million men and one and a half billion natives. The first had the Word, the other borrowed. In between, minor kings, feudal lords, and phony bourgeoisies forged from all this served as intermediaries. In the colonies, the truth was naked; the "metropolises" preferred it clothed. They must make the natives love them. Like mothers, somehow. The European elite decided to make a Native elite; they selected teenagers, whom they branded on their foreheads with a hot iron the principles of Western culture; they stuffed in their mouths the gagging sounds of big, pasty words stuck to their teeth. After a brief stay in the metropolis, they were sent home, rigged. These living lies had nothing to say to their brothers, and they shouted, "Parthenon! Fraternity!" and launched words of Paris, London, Amsterdam and somewhere in Africa, Asia, lips opened ". . . thenon . . . nity!" It was the golden age. (*Dt*, 37)

Sartre's reference to a past golden age was an announcement of the end of the colonial party. He didn't come with the gospels but instead an omen of things to come. The passage reveals obvious themes from *Black Skin, White Masks*, from narcissism to claustrophobic dictates on language. The theme of imposed mirroring returns, but this time with a twist: Rejected, Sartre suggests, is the desired desire of colonialism and racism. Ceasing to be perceived or at least treated as gods, European humanity now faced, he believed, the nightmare of all narcissists: irrelevance. As he later writes:

When Fanon, on the contrary, said that Europe is done for, do not sound the alarm. He offers a diagnosis. This doctor does not pretend to condemn without appeal (we've heard of miracles), nor is he offering a cure. He simply concludes she is dying. An outsider, his verdict is based on the gathered symptoms. As for the cure, no: he has other concerns in mind. Whether it dies or survives, he doesn't care. For this reason, his book is scandalous. And if you whisper, grinning awkwardly, "He's really got it in for us!" the true nature of the scandal escapes you: Fanon has nothing "in for" you at all; his book, hot for others, leaves you on ice; he often speaks about you but never to you. Gone are the black Goncourts and yellow Nobels: the times of the colonized laureates are over. An ex-Native "of the French language" applies this language with new urgency and uses it solely for the purpose of addressing the colonized. (*Dt*, 39–40)

Sartre proverbially *gets it*, although history has shown otherwise on such matters as Nobels and other First World citations of recognition. Fanon was attempting to transcend the pitfalls of recognition, and that did, indeed, threaten the system in a way Sartre well understood: It is not hate that scares those of a colonial mind-set. It's their irrelevance.

Sartre actually saw Fanon for the last time in late October in a hotel room in Rome, where Fanon was too stricken even to speak. Sartre sat by him for several hours without realizing he may have also symbolized the white reaper that worried Fanon in his youth. His last image of the powerful revolutionary, who was only a few months earlier a seemingly endless reservoir of energy, was of him laid out on the hotel bed, his frail body drained and twisted, in his continued struggle against his impending death.

Requiem for the Messenger

Fanon . . . was never just committed to a cause. He gave himself whole, undivided, without hesitation. He was absolutely passionate.

—AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

As his body deteriorated from his illness, Fanon's comrades urged him to take the advice of the Soviet doctors and seek treatment in the United States. He finally agreed. He faced, however, another problem. How was he to get there when it was clear, given the U.S. government's increased involvement in Vietnam, that it was a staunch ally of France? It had to be done with secrecy and with the aid of the reconnaissance division of the government he often criticized. Peter Geismar related the situation:

The black doctor was a nice catch for the intelligence services. . . . Washington would be able to fatten its dossiers on the leftist segment of the FLN; Fanon knew a lot about other African liberation movements. His kind of thinking and activities were a threat to Western interests in the Third World.¹

The CIA agent Oliver Iselin stewarded "Ibrahim" Fanon into the United States with the promised stealth.² What followed, however, is unclear among Fanon scholars. Reports have ranged from Fanon's visiting and subsequently

dying in New York City to his remaining in Washington, D.C. What has become orthodoxy, however, is that he was kept in the Dupont Plaza Hotel in Washington, D.C., without treatment for several days until he contracted pneumonia. Who knows what information the CIA may have received from Fanon under the delirium of his illness? It is possible that they didn't receive much, if any, information, for Fanon was a specialist in techniques for resisting torture. Teaching these techniques to the FLN when he was the head physician at Blida-Joinville had led to his eventual resignation and public enlistment in their cause. He trained guerrillas how not to divulge secrets under the worst of conditions. His time in CIA custody was such an instance. By the time Fanon was taken to Bethesda, he was on the verge of death.

The prize was put through several blood transfusions. After the last instance, he declared to Josie, "They put me through the cleaners last night."³

There is irony in Fanon—a man who devoted much theoretical and political energy to de-fanging the impact of race and racism, concepts marked from their inception by proscriptions premised on blood—facing death from a blood disease.

"Race" has etymological roots in the word *raza*, a term used by Christians in Andalusia, Muslim-ruled Iberia, to refer to breeds of dogs, horses, and, when referring to human populations, Moors and Jews. As Muslims from North Africa, the Moors, along with the Jews (many of whom were determined by fourth-century Roman edicts limiting Jewish proselytizing and intermixing with Christians), represented a deviation from Christian normativity. Given that history, there is much insight in Fanon's observation that he who hates Jews invariably hates blacks as well. The defeat of the Moors in Grenada in 1492 was followed by the Inquisition to assess the Christian authenticity of the remaining *conversos*, converted populations, a process that led to demands for demonstrations of "purity of blood" (*limpieza de sangre*).⁴ The standard was individuals whose origins were "purely" Christian. The notion of purity here emerged from theological naturalism, where the natural was determined by its alignment with theological dogma. Since all that was natural emanated from the theological center, Moors and Jews stood as prototypical instances of the anthropology of damnation that took a path to the modern term *race*, as used by François Bernier in his 1684 account, "A New Division of the Earth."

In today's terms, the dormant genes of self-destruction in Fanon's body were awakened. His body, saturated with a flowing cancer, was eating itself. The genes linked Fanon to some of his ancestors, to his "blood relatives,"

in a way that repeated his famous reflections in *Black Skin, White Masks* on the body, blood, and the salty fluids of desperation. It's worth recounting his analysis, with some elaboration. Let us, in an act of blues repetition, revisit thoughts from his youth. Recall that in its fifth chapter, Fanon thematized the previous ones through autobiographical reflections on the forms of self-consciousness stimulated and struggled for from the crisis occasioned by a little boy pointing at him and shouting, "Look, *un nègre!*" Fanon's presupposition of nonraciality, which he realized was the presumption of a white normative standpoint on reality, was shattered as the imago of *le nègre* latched onto him as its referent.

"Who? *Me?*" he seemed to ask, while the world encircled him and closed in to offer no exit.

That body, his body, wanted refuge, a world in which it could move with the flowing certainty of its own worth and conviction, but he found himself caught, enmeshed in a web of designations, none of which he wanted, but all of which imposed themselves, enwrapping him in what seemed to be a sealed fate by which he fell to the ground, ready for the role set for him to play: *Le nègre* was a black body offered as one *manqué*, as a body gone bad. In such a body flowed bad blood, that which, as fluid, offered a constant risk of spilling beyond its bounds, of pollution. Thus, whether as *le nègre* psychiatrist, *le nègre* writer, *le nègre* singer, *le nègre* a-host-of-other-things, the neurotic role was unveiled in the folly of illegitimizing membership: His presence constituted the absence. He was, by definition, that which was illegitimate in relation to everything but his own illegitimacy, although, as the success of white minstrels suggests, more radical forms of illegitimacy were demanded: *Le nègre* was apparently even bad at being himself.⁵ The paradox of his existence was its non-existence. Even his efforts to claim it, as Fanon's forays into Négritude revealed, manifested failure. Understandably, the situation occasioned despair and led him to weep. But, we should remember, getting to that point was circuitous.

As we saw, the body is of central importance in Fanon's thought. This is because the body is a necessary condition of appearance, since to be seen is to be seen somewhere. Much of his writing explores illicit dimensions of black appearance, including its neurotic, self-defeating structure: As illegitimate-in-itself, black existence attempts to be seen in a world in which its appearance is a violation of societal norms. Compared with our earlier observations on Christendom and damnation, the black thus faces a twice-fallen reality, which Fanon, as we know, described as a zone of nonbeing. This is more of a collapse than a fall that places the black body into a schema of

deviations and imitation. As deviation, it falls from a presumed original white body, which raises the question: Why doesn't it *rise* from the white body?

As the standard, the white body would make illegitimate the movement in any direction of deviation; whether up or down, the consequence is failure. The path, then, seems to be to overcome the deviation by reclaiming an original unity. The white, however, denies the original unity, because that would entail a potential blackness at the heart of whiteness, which makes the claimed reclamation imitation. As imitation, what is lacked is the original advantage of the self as standard. The imitation, in other words, is not its own standard. It is a failure, as we have seen, even of its achievement. To achieve imitation is to fail at what an imitation imitates, namely, an original.

Recall that "Failure," for Fanon, requires a *sociodiagnosis*, since, as Fanon argues, racism and colonialism are sociogenic. Working at the level of failure summons psychoanalytical resources of interpretation. Working with failure carries the danger, however, of resignation, for implicit in such a conception is the preference for its overcoming: To fail at failure offers its own paradoxes. So Fanon ventured through the minefield of failures. The social diagnostics of failure in an antiblack and colonial world rely on the human capacity to construct a symbolic world that transcends, at least at the construction of meaning, reductive biological and other natural forces. The black body, here also marked as "the black soul," demands demystification at its source. This construction, a failure of human understanding, asserts itself through a variety of idolatrous offerings: language, bad-faith love, and lawlike constitutional theories of psychic life. Deviation and imitation reveal themselves in the failure of each movement: To speak, the black appears as an echo of white speech.

Yet to speak, to reach out, offers the possibility of love. To love is to seek a reflection that is not one's own, but the quest for recognition leads such blacks, whether female or male, to the arms and reflecting eyes of white men. To dream is to rehearse the trauma of collapsed and closed symbols; in the dream life of colonial subjects, a gun is, as we saw, a gun. These series of failures recur in Fanon's autobiographical reflection that is also not autobiography. This seemingly awkward formulation is connected to an additional underlying thesis: That *a* black means *the* black, which means a collapse of differentiation from the encroaching *nègre*. Autobiography is an individuated narrative hindered by the racial and colonial situation of the narrative; as an effort to unveil an inner world whose legitimacy is denied by the social circumstances, Fanon, as the black and *le nègre*, performed the supposedly impossible. He achieved magic.

Magic is the effort to control and dominate reality by producing some-

thing seemingly from nothing.⁶ Fanon's magical reflection announced itself immediately from the body, but one marked for nonappearance because of its illegitimacy. To see that body is to acknowledge what should be disavowed. Thus, it is those susceptible to the prereflective, those not yet socialized into self-deceiving norms of social propriety, who belch out the image, including the self-image, that the society prefers to repress: "Look, *a nègre!*"

The encounter is reminiscent of the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, "The Emperor's New Clothes." Duped by the system, Fanon walked with a white imago, and its being white meant that its identification would be redundant because supposedly encompassed by the term "normal." Thus, being normal, Fanon presumed others would see the white skin that should have come along with his white mask. Like the emperor's new suit, Fanon's wasn't there. The effect was collapse and disintegration.

The assembling of the self, or effort to *re-assemble*, to *re-collect*, to *re-member* the self, was Fanon's body offered back to him. He then saw that body, although looked at before in mirrors, differently. The mirror of the self as white and whole was shattered, and the realization of how he was seen by whites challenged anti-*nègre*ness through the offering of the *nègre* self. That self, that body, not associated before with *his* body, fell from the fallen into his transformed consciousness. The result, in Fanon's reflection, brought him to two stages of double consciousness. The first involved seeing himself through the eyes of the alienating Other. The second was the realization of the first as a constructed reality. That involved demonstration of the contradictions of the imposed self (the fall after the collapse) on the lived reality of the everyday self. For Fanon, this demonstration had already begun with the appeal to social diagnostics, with his observation of the black as a white construction, and continued through the analysis of failures and the body. At the point of bodily identification, of the image of himself in the little white boy's eyes as the *nègre*, Fanon confessed being locked in a state of certain uncertainty as compared, in existential terms, to the original condition, the body at home with itself. That body, fluid in its movements, was free to reach to the world with expectations without fear of collapsing into itself. White normativity, however, bogged that body down with a "historical-racial schema," constructing the body of the *nègre*, a body turned inward in conflict with itself, devouring itself. For such a body, the ordinary is always an extraordinary achievement. The result was a body marred by endless self-negations, a body *de trop*, a body that was too much. Overdetermined, *de trop* historical forces had a role for Fanon to play as the *nègre*. Fanon thus faced the bizarre logic

of racist systems, where the system could be maintained despite individual progress by a subversion of rules and exceptions: Regarding an accomplished black person as an exception to a rule of black inferiority maintained the rule. The logic was preserved through an inversion with whites: A white person's failure was, and for the most part continues to be, treated as an exception to the rule of white superiority. This logic enabled the emergence of a black body as an exception to black bodies, yet as an exception, it was at war with its inner functioning principles. The consequence was a resigned effort at repressed pathology: The exception was the *absoluteness of the rule* waiting to come out. That lurking reassertion of mythic cohesion led to the heaviness of action under the racial-historical schema.

Fanon dedicated his life to breaking free of the weighted expectations of consciousness without freedom. In each instance, the potential of cultural transformation as a bodily phenomenon came to the fore. We saw, in *Year V of the Algerian Revolution*, that the Algerian women's various transformations of bodily representation presented new considerations for the postcolonial state, for the Algerian women who carried bombs, who experienced themselves in Western clothing, who learned acts of comportment in military campaigns, exemplified an upsurge whose containment was a dialectic of body and world beyond a consciousness without freedom to one fighting for it. In *The Damned of the Earth*, the plea took the form of asking, in the concluding sentence, for the development of a new skin, through which a new humanity could be born. Yet in the early *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon had concluded with a consideration of bodily freedom.

When oppressed, embodied consciousness is overly determined inward, the direction of one marked by questioning that oppression pointed outward; it was that second form of double consciousness born of dialectical critique. Fanon's first book offered this prayer, and his life, as it came to a close, never stopped him from asking, questioning, and exemplifying his humanistic commitment, ultimately, to life.

His wife, Josie, and his son, Olivier, were brought to him. He spoke, occasionally, of his future projects. He managed to write a letter to his friend Roger Taïeb:

What I wanted to tell you, Roger, is that death is always with us and the important thing is not to know how to avoid it but to make sure we do our utmost for the ideas we believe in. The thing that shocks me as I lie here in this bed, feeling the strength exiting my body, is not that I'm

dying but that I'm dying of acute leukemia in Washington, D.C., when I could have died three months ago facing the enemy on a battlefield, when I already knew I had this disease. We are nothing on this earth if we do not first and foremost serve a cause, the cause of the people, the cause of freedom and justice. I want you to know that even when the doctors had lost all hope, I was still thinking, in a fog granted, but thinking, nonetheless, of the Algerian people, of the people of the Third World, and if I managed to hold on, it was because of them.⁷

The tragedy of Fanon's situation was that his intense relationship with his body had come full circle through the drama of dying. From earlier reflections on the dreaded epidermal schema, his vital spirit was now under the scrutiny of those microtomes he feared but a decade earlier. No longer facing an explosion, he found himself suffering the experience of dissolution, of dissolving, of withering away. The metaphors he used in his unfinished play *Les mains parallèles*, written during his years as a medical student, were remarkably prescient:

Hemorrhaging stars that condemn me
 Stop! . . .



Figure II. Procession to Fanon's burial.

To no longer see mute whiteness
 To no longer see death.⁸

On December 6, 1961, a few days after composing his letter to Taïeb, Fanon's fight against "mute whiteness," which for him was death itself, was over. He had survived many life-threatening episodes: during childhood, a gun accident that could have been worse; two instances of serious injury on the battlefield for which he was honored for valor in World War II; being thrown by the explosion from a jeep on expedition in Tunisia; and assassins from the *Main Rouge* seeking him out over North Africa and in southern Europe. He survived all that, but in the end, it was in his body, in the cells of his blood, and the micro-assassins of bacteria and viruses that prevailed.

His brother Joby received a note from him a few days after the telegram announcing his death. The letter, Joby explained, had his full address. Frantz never placed his address in a letter till then. Joby's interpretation is that it was a cry for help.⁹ Frantz probably would have preferred his dead body to have been hurled at the enemy. Joby agreed. It was, however, brought instead to Tunis and then on to Algeria, where, after a long procession with military rituals befitting an honored soldier and martyr, he was laid to rest.

There is an expression: "What's in a name?"

Yet Fanon's first and middle names have prophetic significance at his life's end. "Frantz" was a way of identifying his maternal Alsatian ancestry through an act of pronunciation. It is the way "France" is said in Alsace. And "Omar" is of Arabic and Hebrew origin. In the former, it means "flourishing," used in phrases such as "to live a long life" and "ultimate devotee." Traced further to Hebrew, the name also means "eloquent speaker." To have names bringing together France, Arabia, and Israel/Palestine was honored by the man. His eloquence was legendary. Yet there is something at first strange in a middle name also signifying longevity for someone whose brain and heart stopped at the age of thirty-six. The paradox, however, is manifold. At his death, Fanon's impact was profound. So much, ranging from a country and its institutions to the generative potential of thought, flourished out of his actions and words in his short life. There is no longer a Blida-Joinville Hospital in Algeria but instead, amid many Fanonian legacies, including the avenue on which the National Library of Algeria is located, there is a hospital that now bears the name of that young man, a fusion of so many worlds, whose prayers continue to make us question.

Afterword

Drucilla Cornell

Lewis Gordon is unquestionably one of the most important readers and critics of the work of Frantz Fanon. In this book, he breaks new ground. Particularly with his reexamination of two of the most controversial chapters in *Black Skin, White Masks* which grapple with interracial relationships, told first by a woman of color and then by a black man. But to give background to Gordon's analysis of these chapters, I want to review some of the central ideas in Fanon's work, as Gordon underscores them. The first is, as Gordon powerfully argues, that blacks are forced into a condition of anonymity simply by the projected meanings of their skin color. As Gordon eloquently puts it, "Each black is, thus, ironically nameless by virtue of being *named* 'black'" (chap. 2). This anonymity is crucial to why the assertion of an "I" that is a unique human being is constantly negated by the reality of racism that denies that there is such a human phenomenon as a black man or woman. Thus, as Gordon powerfully tells us, blacks are forced into a kind of condition or zone of nonbeing. If they are black, they exist as a thing, or even, as Gordon reminds us, as a monster. Gordon adds to his earlier work on Fanon, which describes how black experience is constantly negated by the racism that blacks must endure, by pointing out how this negation takes the form of denying to blacks anything like a subjective life. If W. E. B. Du Bois asked the question, "What does it mean to be a problem?" as basic to African American life, seeking to underscore that it is not blacks that are the problem, the problem is racism, then Gordon tells us that Fanon takes us one step further: Blacks not only have to assert that they are not the

problem, we need to understand how the forced imprisonment in a zone of nonbeing makes it almost impossible for blacks to ask the question: "What do we want?" Of course, in a thoroughly racist world, the first and only answer to that question seems to be to escape. And how does one escape? It is against this social world in which the black man and woman are sealed in interactions not worthy of the name human, because there is no reciprocity, that Gordon reads Fanon's two chapters: on Mayotte Capécia and Jean Veneuse. Critics of these chapters have often simple-mindedly believed that they were directed against interracial relationships. But Fanon, as read by Gordon, is making a much more profound point. First, antiblack racism denies sexual difference in that, to quote Gordon, "The antiblack woman and the antiblack man collapse into the same" (chap. 2). This loss of sexual difference is part of the obliteration of the uniqueness of the experience of women of color. For Gordon, when Fanon writes of the woman of color that he "knows nothing of her," he is both reminding his audience that during his years as a practicing psychiatrist he had little or no access to clinical writings on women of color, either because people of color were suspicious of psychiatry and took their suffering family members to other forms of healing, or the clinical reports that were made were buried under stereotypes of women of color as being nymphomaniacs, drug addicts, aggressive psychopaths, and so on. So what does Capécia want from her white lover? Simply and tragically, she wants to be white. Gordon powerfully reads Capécia as desiring what he calls "words of love." The words of love allow Capécia to have the fantasy that the spoken love allows her to appear as a desirable object, and that desirable object can only be white. Thus the words "I love you" do not mean "I love you, even though you are a woman of color"; they become instead a kind of magic, that bestows on the woman of color, even if only in fantasy, that if she is loved she must really "be white."

In like manner John Veneuse is seeking in a white woman the fantasy that he is finally a man. Not a stud, not a pimp, but a man, whose sexuality is thus humanized. Black male sexuality has been "thingified"; we all know the supposed stereotype of the black man with the huge organ, but then the organ itself simply reduces him to his dick. If a woman loves you, then she must love you as a human being. If a white man loves you, then he must love you as a human being. Therefore in this illusory world of love you are allowed to escape from the zone of nonbeing into a "let's pretend I'm white" world. Of course, this attempt fails miserably and leads to a kind of narcissistic collapse. Capécia is ultimately deserted by her lover and is forced into

single-motherhood. Veneuse acts out what seems to be his only way of asserting his independence, which is by abandoning his so-called white lover, who has bestowed on him the supposedly private world of an escape from racism. Veneuse, as Gordon tells us, was an orphan, so his narcissistic crisis can be seen simply as abandonment syndrome. But as Gordon tells us, this does not fully explain Veneuse's behavior at all. He cannot be a man in black. A woman, even a white woman, does not have the same power to mirror him as a desired white object as does a man. This would seem to indicate that there is a differential position between black men and black women, but as I have suggested, racism obliterates sexual difference. It does so by bearing both men and women under stereotypes of themselves as sexualized things, in which the possibility of interracial love is actually completely forbidden, at the same time that it is seemingly enacted. And how can this be the case? Because in the end the black man and woman, as sexualized things, can never achieve the status of being worthy objects of desire and love. The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan tells us that the mirror stage or the imaginary is necessary for every human being to integrate her or his own bodily existence into an "I." But what is denied to a black man and woman is precisely what I have called in my earlier work the imaginary domain. Instead, the black body has imposed upon it the very notion of its "I"-ness, a man or a woman's "sex" becomes projected as both glorified and horrifying. In this way, in the case of both men and women their "sex" both becomes "monstrified," a term Fanon frequently uses. Thus both men and women are denied the primary conditions of narcissism, and therefore it is not surprising that so many, under a racist society, endure enormous suffering and psychic collapse. The black man as a glorified "dick" can never be the Father with a capital F. This is why for Fanon, the Oedipal complex cannot describe nor account for a certain kind of collapse in black masculinity. As Gordon writes, "There is no black father to mirror as The Father. Consequently, there is no struggle for the mother through which to develop aggression to the father that could also be an expression of sexual desire" (chap. 3). Far from being a critique of interracial relationships, Fanon is showing us, in a profound way, how sexual difference is itself destroyed by racism, and that therefore, individual solutions to the escape from nonbeing are impossible. But he is also foregrounding how fundamental feminist issues about sexuality are crucial to the process of revolution and decolonization. Feminism is not some aside, waiting until the seizure of state power. Nor is it reducible to a series of demands for equality in all forms of life, as important as that is.

Instead, decolonization and feminism demand a mutation of the human to which Fanon always calls us, in the very arena of the erotic and the sexual. The new human being that will arise out of revolution, and only out of revolution, would also have to transform completely the thoroughly racialized erotic fantasies where black women and men can only love through a projected fantasy of what they are not. We all know the legion stories of the colonizer's desire for the forbidden other. Often this takes the form of forbidding marriage, because to allow a black woman to marry a white man would deny her thingification as a sexualized object. She is there only for pleasure and in the shadows. She cannot come out into the recognized ethical world of what it means to be publicly recognized as someone's wife. Concerns of feminism, which have always demanded, from Alexandra Kollontai onward, the complete transformation of our erotic lives, away from inequality and oppression, is foregrounded in Gordon's reading of these two chapters of *Black Skin, White Masks*.

This emphasis on the subjective life of blacks, which informs Gordon's entire reading of Fanon, allows Gordon to reanalyze Fanon's complex relationship to movements like Négritude and the revitalization of indigenous values more generally. As Gordon insists, Fanon saw in some efforts to revive indigenous culture a process of zombification. Culture is no longer a living heritage; it instead becomes petrified objects preserved in a museum, which reminds us supposedly of primitive forms of life. If there is to be a revival, then, of indigenous and national cultures, it must be through a revolution in which they are recognized as living. This is a crucial distinction Fanon makes between the national consciousness of the bourgeoisie and the national culture of the national struggle. Fanon of course is often condemned for his macho endorsement of violence. But as Gordon rightfully points out, Fanon is only too well aware of the dangers of any armed struggle and particularly the spontaneity of rage that can turn into revenge. He, as Gordon tells us, does not see violence per se as revolutionary. The armed struggle becomes revolutionary when it becomes transformative. Gordon emphasizes that, in Fanon's book on the Algerian revolution, now called *A Dying Colonialism*, which he refers to in the original title *Year Five*, is constantly turning to the transformative aspects of the revolutionary armed struggle, and how in the acts of transformation demanded, a new species of men and women are arising. It is only through this new mutation into a new species, into a human world, that individuals, involved in armed violence, could heal enough to actually form a human world together. Fanon sometimes

writes as if those who have participated in the revolution might never be able to heal enough from the trauma to be a part of this new world. But more frequently he emphasizes that if this is going to be possible, we have to radically transform who we are. Yes, revolution demands the seizing of state power; yes, revolution demands the constituting of a new government; yes, revolution demands complete control of the economy by the people. But it also demands that we be different in every aspect of our daily lives. Gordon has shown that Fanon remains one of our most important thinkers of revolutionary transformation, which is why his work continues to inspire all of those who continue to seek to rebuild a more just world. We are in debt to Gordon for telling us what Fanon said.

Notes

FOREWORD

1. I thank one of them, Philippe Gautier, who took an important part in the campaign against this exhibition and who gave me all the details about this case.

2. In the winter of 2013, political opponents of Christiane Taubira, the Minister of Justice, a native of Guyana, have compared her to a chimpanzee.

3. "If I cannot deflect the will of Heaven, I shall move Hell."

4. Edward W. Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (London: Verso, 2003), 18.

5. See Benjamin Claude Brower, *A Desert Named Peace: The Violence of France's Empire in the Algerian Sahara, 1844–1902* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

INTRODUCTION: ON WHAT A GREAT THINKER SAID

1. Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love: Some Christian Reflections in the Form of Discourses*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

2. See Peter Worsley, "Frantz Fanon and the 'Lumpenproletariat,'" *Socialist Register* 9 (1972): 193. See also Alejandro J. De Oto's *Fanon: Política del sujeto poscolonial* (Mexico City, Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2003).

3. This development is due to the work of French and Francophone scholars who have devoted attention to research on Fanon, and the catalyzing efforts of Mireille Fanon-Mendès-France, his daughter, who directs the Fondation Frantz Fanon. Scholars also include Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun, who organized a United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conference on Fanon in 2007, and Achille Mbembe, who

has worked in a variety of Francophone institutes and think tanks, such as the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). There are also articles in journals such as *African Development* (Senegal), *Tumultes* (France), *Mouvement* (France), *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* (United States and France), and a growing number of studies, such as Matthieu Renault's *Frantz Fanon: De l'anticolonialisme à la critique postcoloniale* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2011), and Imudia Norman Ajari, "Race et Violence: Frantz Fanon à l'épreuve du postcolonial" (Toulouse: PhD diss. in philosophy, L'Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès, 2014). There is also continued interest in the Hispanophone and Lusophone worlds as new translations of Fanon's writings, with commentaries by some of the most influential scholars in the humanities and social sciences, come to print. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are De Oto's *Fanon* and Frantz Fanon, *Piel negra, máscaras blancas*, trans. Ana Useros Martín (Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Akal, 2009), which features in Spanish an introduction by Samir Amin, a preface by Immanuel Wallerstein, and an appendix of essays by Judith Butler, Lewis R. Gordon, Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Walter D. Mignolo, and Sylvia Wynter. And then there are the various institutes and working groups across the African continent, such as the Thinking Africa group in Grahamstown, South Africa, and the meetings at the Bibliothèque Nationale du Hamma, in Algeria.

4. These include, for example, Nigel Gibson, ed., *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 1999), Anthony C. Alessandrini, *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 1999), and Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renée T. White, eds., *Fanon: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

5. The issue of a long period of near silence in the study of Fanon in France is handled well by Achille Mbembe, who argues that much of this could be attributed to the French defeat in the Algerian War and the loss of its empire. The growth in Fanon studies in France, marked by publication of his complete Works, is also discussed in that article. See Mbembe, "Metamorphic Thought: The Works of Frantz Fanon," *African Studies* 71, no. 1 (2012): 19–28. This tendency to erase the memory of revolutionary struggles and Fanon's importance in their regard also emerges in Anglophone scholarship. For critical discussion, see P. Mabogo More, "Locating Frantz Fanon in (Post)Apartheid South Africa," *Journal of African Asian Studies* (forthcoming).

6. For a sense of the debates and issues at stake, see Nigel Gibson, "Thinking Fanon, 50 Years Later: Fanonian Translations in and beyond 'Fanon Studies,'" *Pambazuka*, no. 576 (March 14, 2012): <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/80744>.

7. Thus, the following short references will be used in the parallel citations and notes: *Pn*, for *Peau noire masques blancs* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952); *Pra*, for *Pour la révolution africaine: Écrits politiques* (Paris: François Maspero, 1964), edited by Josie Fanon; references here will be to the 1969 edition; *Lv*, for *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* (Paris: Maspero, 1959), although my references will be to the 1979 edition, published as *Sociologie d'une révolution*; and *Dt*, for *Les damnés de la terre*, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, presentation de Gérard Chaliand (Paris: François Maspero, 1961), with my references being to the 1991 edition published in Paris by Éditions Gallimard. These books are known respectively in English as *Black Skin, White Masks*; *Toward the African Revolution*; *A Dying Colonialism*; and *The Wretched of the Earth*. The title of the last is one with which I have much disagreement, so in this book it will be referred to in its proper translation as *The Damned of the Earth*. I will refer to the English titles in the main text, but citations will be to the French, and, as mentioned, the translations are my own. Finally, for a collection of Fanon's psychiatric writings not included in *Pra*, see Frantz Fanon, *Decolonizing Madness: The Psychiatric Writings of Frantz Fanon*, trans. Lisa Damon, ed. Nigel Gibson, with preface by Alice Cherki and afterword by Roberto Beneduce (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

8. Worsley does a splendid job of articulating the interconnectedness of these many aspects of the man in his "Frantz Fanon and the 'Lumpenproletariat.'"

I. "I AM FROM MARTINIQUE"

1. See, for example, Albert Memmi, "Review of Peter Geismar, *Fanon*, and David Cauter, *Frantz Fanon*," *New York Times Book Review*, March 14, 1971, 5. Vergès, Hall, and Julien's positions appear in Isaac Julien, *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask* (Normal Films, 1995), in *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read (Seattle: Bay Press, 1996), and Henry Louis Gates Jr., "Critical Fanonism," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 3 (1991): 457–78. See also F. M. Gottheil, "Fanon and the Economics of Colonialism: A Review Article," *Quarterly Review of Economics and Business* 1 (Autumn 1967): 78.

2. Joby Fanon, "Pour Frantz, pour notre mère," *Sans Frontiere* 5–11 (February 1982): 10. See also Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum, 1985), 19.

3. The essay "Antilleans and Africans" is included in *Pour la révolution africaine: Écrits politiques*, ed. Josie Fanon (Paris: François Maspero, 1964).

4. See Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Volontés, 1939), available in many editions in English, but see, e.g., *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land—Cahier d'un retour au pays natal / Aimé Césaire*, trans.

Mireille Rosello with Annie Pritchard, intro. by Mireille Rosello (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Bloodaxe Books, 1995). Césaire's story is rich with irony: a plaque in his name was installed in the Panthéon in Paris on 6 April 2011.

5. Joby Fanon, "Pour Frantz, pour notre mère," 6.

6. For recent elaboration, see Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, trans. Nadia Benabid (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), 10. Hereafter cited as *Portrait*.

7. Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*, 27.

8. See Cherki, *Portrait*, 13. The situation was not different in the former British colonies, where black veterans returned, as in South Africa, only to the gift of a bicycle, and, in the United States, to lynch mobs. See Vincent Moloji's documentary *A Pair of Boots and a Bicycle* (South Africa: Rare Earth Films, 2007), and Walter C. Rucker Jr. and James N. Upton, eds., *The Encyclopedia of American Race Riots*, vol. 2, *N–Z* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007).

9. For a moving discussion of Fanon's plays, see Joby Fanon, *Frantz Fanon, My Brother: Doctor, Playwright, Revolutionary*, trans. Daniel Nethery (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2014), chapter 12, "The Playwright," 57–62. For a scholarly discussion, see Keithley Philmore Woolward, "Towards a Performative Theory of Liberation: Theatre, Theatricality and 'Play' in the Work of Frantz Fanon" (PhD diss. in French, New York University, 2008). See also Clément Mbom, "Frantz Fanon," in *Multicultural Writers since 1945: An A-to-Z Guide*, ed. Alba della Fazia Amoia and Bettina Liebowitz Knapp (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2004), 211–15.

10. I don't include Mireille's mother's name to maintain her privacy at her daughter's request.

11. See the foundation's website: <http://frantzfanonfoundation-fondationfrantzfanon.com/>.

12. David Macey offers more than most; see his *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* (New York: Picador, 2002). Hereafter cited as *Biography*.

13. See Macey and Cherki for more discussion of Fanon's dictating his books and Josie's role in their production.

14. Frantz Fanon, "La plainte de Noir: L'expérience vécu du Noir," *Esprit* 179 (May 1951): 657–79, and "Le syndrome nord-Africain," *Esprit* 187 (February 1952): 237–84.

15. Léopold Sédhac, *L'anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, with a foreword by Jean-Paul Sartre (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948).

16. A copy of Fanon's doctoral thesis is available at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris.

17. Patrick Ehlen, *Frantz Fanon: A Spiritual Biography* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 97–98.

18. Cherki, *Portrait*, 24. Jeanson confirms this account in Cheikh Djemai's documentary film, *Frantz Fanon: His Life, His Struggle, His Work* (Algeria: ArtMattan Productions, 2001).

19. Cedric Robinson, "The Appropriation of Frantz Fanon," *Race & Class* 35, no. 1 (1993): 79–91.

20. On this matter, see, e.g., Drucilla Cornell, *Defending Ideals: War, Democracy, and Political Struggles* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

21. For discussion of recent work in Fanon studies, see Elizabeth A. Hope and Tracey Nichols, eds., *Fanon and the Decolonization of Philosophy*, foreword by Mireille Fanon-Mendès-France (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010); Nigel Gibson, ed., *Living Fanon* (New York: Palgrave, 2011); Matthieu Renault, *Frantz Fanon: De l'anticolonialisme à la critique postcoloniale* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2011); Reiland Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism: Fanon's Critical Theory and the Dialectics of Decolonization* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2011); and Jane Anna Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Fanon* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

2. WRITING THROUGH THE ZONE OF NONBEING

1. See Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophy: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 126–28.

2. For elaboration of this aspect of theory and thought, see Lewis R. Gordon, "Theory in Black: Teleological Suspensions in Philosophy of Culture," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 18, no. 2 (2010): 193–214.

3. For discussion, see Lewis R. Gordon, *Existential Africa: Understanding African Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), chap. 4. For dynamics of not being seen by virtue of being seen, see also Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities International Press, 1995), part 3.

4. "This book should have been written three years ago. . . . But these truths were fire in me then" (*Pn* 6).

5. "*Que veut l'homme noir?*" This passage is usually translated: "What does a black man want?" Notice, however, that Fanon doesn't write "*un homme*" ("a man") but instead "*l'homme*." The question that preceded it was: "*Que veut l'homme?*" that is, "What does man want?" Fanon here doesn't mean male. He means the generic term as in human being or human beings. To convey Fanon's meaning, I took the liberty of translating "*l'homme noir*" as "blacks" to convey "black human beings" or "black people."

6. See W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Study of Negro Problems," *Annals of the*

American Academy of Political and Social Science 11 (1898): 1–23; reprinted in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 56 (2000): 13–27; and *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1903). For contemporary discussion and interpretation, see Nahum Dimitri Chandler, *X—The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

7. Du Bois's classic formulation is in *The Souls of Black Folk*. For elaboration of potentiated double consciousness, see Paget Henry, "Africana Phenomenology: Its Philosophical Implications," *The C. L. R. James Journal* 11, no. 1 (2005): 79–112. See also Gordon, *Existential Africana*, chap. 4, and Jane Anna Gordon, "The Gift of Double Consciousness: Some Obstacles to Grasping the Contributions of the Colonized," in *Postcolonialism and Political Theory*, ed. Nalini Persram (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2007), 143–61.

8. I write "women" to maintain consistency with the plural formulation of Fanon's question. Translators of Freud often formulate the question as, "What does a woman want?" As the indefinite pronoun in effect means *any woman*, then "women" works here.

9. See Ronald A. T. Judy, "Fanon's Body of Black Experience," in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Gordon et al., 60–61.

10. "The Black" and "the White" in English has nationalist connotations, whereas Fanon was referring to a semiological racial marker, which is how the lowercase formulations of "the black" and "the white" are used in English.

11. See *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, vol. 1: *Inferno*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam Books, 1980). Fanon had actually begun writing down poetic meditations on life and death with racial motifs as early as his unfinished play *Les mains parallèles*, in which struggles with Christological imagery and racism were apparent, as his brother Joby Fanon reflects in his discussion of the play in Joby Fanon, *Frantz Fanon, My Brother: Doctor, Playwright, Revolutionary*, trans. Daniel Nethery (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2014), chap. 12. That play and *Black Skin, White Masks* are not Fanon's only updating of Dante's classic meditation on hell. He returns to it, as we will see, in his final work, *The Damned of the Earth*, where the connections are even stronger. In that work, each chapter presents a hellish world of violence, betrayal, and revenge, at the end of which Fanon issues a plea for humanity to shed its skin and inaugurate a new humanity.

12. For a detailed discussion of this concept, especially in terms of assessing one's father, see Jean-Paul Rocchi, "James Baldwin: Écriture et identité" (Paris: Université Paris-Sorbonne [Paris IV], doctoral diss., 2001), especially 44. Interestingly enough, the concept also relates to the Jewish concept of sin. The

Hebrew word *chet*, often translated as sin, literally means “missing the mark.” I thank Jane Anna Gordon for this reminder.

13. For commentary on Nietzsche’s approach, see Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, trans. C. F. Wallraff and F. J. Schmitz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

14. Quoted in *Pn*, 14/ *Black Skin, White Masks*, 18; it refers to Valéry’s *Charmés* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952).

15. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. with an introduction by Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press; New York: Routledge, 1962).

16. These quotations are on pages 15 and 16 of *Pn*. See *Black Skin, White Masks*, 20–21.

17. Fela Kuti (Ibo) makes good fun of this phenomenon in the Nigerian context in his song, “Mr. Grammaticaloylisationalism Is the Boss” (1975), and for a powerful critique of linguistic colonization, see Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (Kikuyu), *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Nairobi: East African Publishing Company, 1986).

18. This theme is in the thought of many existentialists, but see especially Simone de Beauvoir’s discussion in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel, 2000).

19. I was once queried by a copy editor of another book about the correlation of blacks with Caliban. That character, she insisted, was despicable, and it is degrading to associate blacks with him. What she failed to realize is that for an antiblack racist, all blacks are ultimately despicable and hence “niggers.” And what are “niggers” if not Caliban?

20. For recent discussion of this aspect of colonialism, where the colonial administrator is at war with the teacher and the priest, see Olúfẹmi Táíwò’s, *How Colonialism Preempted Development in Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

21. Chester Fontenot Jr., “Frantz Fanon: The Revolutionary,” *First World* 2, no. 3 (1979): 27.

22. Mayotte Capécia, *Je suis martiniquaise* (Paris: Corrèa, 1948) and *La négresse blanche* (Paris: Corrèa, 1950). For a review in the Anglophone world early after its publication, see Mercer Cook, “Review of *Je suis martiniquaise*,” *Journal of Negro History* 34, no. 3 (July 1949): 369–71.

23. T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminisms* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

24. Abdoulaye Sadjí’s *Nini, mulâtresse du Sénégal* (Paris: *Présence Africaine*

1–3, 1954). See also his article “Littérature et colonisation,” *Présence Africaine* 6 (April 1949).

25. Quoted in Joby Fanon, “Pour Frantz, pour notre mère,” *Sans Frontière* 5–11 (February 1982):10; Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum, 1985), 19, trans. Bulhan’s.

26. See Matthieu Renault, “Le genre de la race: Fanon, lecteur de Beauvoir,” *Actuel Marx*, no. 55 (2014): 36–37.

27. Simone de Beauvoir, *Pour une morale de l’ambiguïté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 51. The passage in the English edition, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel, 2000). is on page 35. The actual title is “For Moral Ambiguity,” but the English translator opted for “Ethics of Ambiguity,” perhaps because of Beauvoir’s preference for responsibilities emerging from ambiguity of meaning instead of the mere act of following moral rules.

28. *Ibid.*, 58; in the English edition, 40.

29. See Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe, I and II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949); available in English as *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage, 2011). For discussion of Beauvoir’s influence on Sartre, see, for example, Margaret Simons, *Beauvoir and the Second Sex: Feminism, Race, and the Origins of Existentialism* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), esp. chap. 3.

30. On the significance of masculine demotion, see, e.g., Amy Alexander and Alvin Poussaint, “Suicide in Black and White: Theories and Statistics,” in *A Companion to African-American Studies*. ed. Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 265–78. See also W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (1935; New York: Free Press, 1998), and Deborah Belle and Heather E. Bullock, “SPSSI Policy Statement: The Psychological Consequences of Unemployment,” *Society for the Psychological Study of Societal Issues* (June 27–29, 2014): <http://www.spssi.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewpage&pageid=1457>.

31. For recent discussion of the racial damage waged by these portraits from popular culture, see Miraj Desai, “Psychology, the Psychological, and Critical Praxis: A Phenomenologist Reads Frantz Fanon,” *Theory and Psychology* 24, no. 1 (2014): 62–63.

32. See Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 784.

33. See the catalogue of the Fonds Frantz Fanon, Centre National de Recherches Préhistoriques, Anthropologiques et Historiques (CNRPAH, Ministère de la Culture, Algiers, Algeria, 2013).

34. See Beauvoir’s concluding chapter of *The Second Sex*, “The Independent Woman,” in which she discusses Wright’s *Black Boy* and her personal account of her relationship with Wright in *America Day by Day*, trans. Carol Cos-

man (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). For elaboration of her relationship with Wright and his influence, see Margaret Simons, *Beauvoir and the Second Sex*, chap. 11: “Richard Wright, Simone de Beauvoir, and *The Second Sex*,” 167–84. Cf. also Renault, “Le genre de la race,” 6–7, and George Yancy’s Fanon-inspired *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 142–43.

35. Ronald Hayman, *Sartre: A Biography* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1987), 220–21.

36. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977).

37. Willy Apollon, “Four Seasons in Femininity, or Four Men in a Woman’s Life,” *Topoi* 12, no. 2 (1993): 103.

38. For more on this concept, see Lewis R. Gordon, “Irreplaceability: An Existential Phenomenological Reflection,” *Listening: A Journal of Religion and Culture* 38, no. 2 (2003): 190–202.

39. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970), 22.

40. I earlier wrote “imaginative resources” because the text itself was part of a genre that dated to the nineteenth century in Latin America, and there is much evidence that Capécia had not written much of it. See A. James Arnold, “Frantz Fanon, Lafcadio Hearn et la supercherie de ‘Mayotte Capécia,’” *Revue de littérature compare*, no. 302 (2002): 148–66. This offers credence to Fanon’s remark of its being “cut-rate merchandise.” As our focus is on what Fanon thought and said, not Capécia, I will leave it to the reader to consult this recommended article and also Capécia’s volume for the latter concern.

41. T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminisms* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998). See also Arnold, “Frantz Fanon, Lafcadio Hearn et la supercherie.”

42. Anna Julia Cooper, *Slavery and the French and Haitian Revolutionists: L’attitude de la France à l’égard de l’esclavage pendant la révolution*, ed. and trans. Frances Richardson Keller (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 114. This work was Cooper’s doctoral dissertation, defended at the University of Paris in 1925.

43. The consequences of these policies in the Dominican Republic continued to the point of legislation and a high court ruling to eliminate retroactively the citizenship of Dominicans of Haitian (that is, admittedly black, although not all Haitians are black) identity in the Dominican Republic. See the Dominican Constitutional Court ruling 0168-13 (September 23, 2013), and for critical discussion, *Amnesty International Report* (November 14, 2013): <http://www.amnesty.org/fr/library/asset/AMR27/017/2013/fr/74d4ee1b-103c>

-487b-b4c6-ab32175e0a43/amr270172013en.html. For an excellent short Fanonian critical analysis of the historical situation on the island and the complicated effort to establish in effect nonrelations between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, see Julissa Reynoso and Neil Roberts, “On Reversals: Blackness and Political Freedom on Hispaniola,” *Clamor* 35, no. 5 (2006): http://clamormagazine.org/issues/35-5/content/people_1.php.

44. Anténor Firmin, in his analysis of Broca, showed that the term originally referred to offspring from unions of white women and black men, which were forbidden in a system that encouraged white male access to all women. See his *Equality of the Races*, trans. Asselin Charles and introduction by Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (New York: Routledge, 2000).

45. See, e.g., Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999).

46. Capécia, *Je suis martiniquaise*, 150.

47. *Ibid.*, 65.

48. Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983). For a genetics study supporting this observation about white males in Latin America and the Caribbean, see K. Bryc, C. Velez, T. Karafet, A. Moreno-Estrada, A. Reynolds, A. Auton, M. Hammer, C. D. Bustamante, and H. Ostrer, “In the Light of Evolution IV: The Human Condition Sackler Colloquium: Genome-wide Patterns of Population Structure and Admixture among Hispanic/Latino Populations,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107, Suppl. 2 (May 11, 2010): 8954–61; <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3024022/>. For a summary, see <http://communications.med.nyu.edu/media-relations/news/genetic-makeup-hispaniclatino-americans-influenced-native-american-european-and>.

49. Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, trans. Brian Singer (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 69.

50. Heinz Kohut, “Thoughts on Narcissism and Narcissistic Rage,” in *Self-Psychology and the Humanities: Reflections on a New Psychoanalytic Approach*, ed. C. B. Strozier (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 124–60.

51. For example, the antagonist in the first edition was the biological mother, not the stepmother. The change was made to make the story more bearable for children. See Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, rev. ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 24.

52. René Maran’s text is *Un homme pareil aux autres* (Paris: Éditions Arc-en-Ciel, 1947).

53. *Ibid.*, 19.

54. *Ibid.*, 46.

55. *Ibid.*, 152–54.

56. For more on Fanon's "heuristic" approach here, see Desai, "Psychology, the Psychological, and Critical Praxis," 58–75, esp. 61.

57. Dominique-Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (New York: Praeger, 1964).

58. For more discussion of Mannoni, including Fanon's impact on his thought, see Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, trans. Nadia Benabid (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 28–36. For Mannoni's revised views, including his anticolonial sentiments, see his "The Decolonization of Myself," *Race* 7 (April 1966): 327–35, which Cherki also discussed.

3. LIVING EXPERIENCE, EMBODYING POSSIBILITY

1. Ronald A. T. Judy, "Fanon's Body of Black Experience," in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renée T. White (Malden, Mass; Blackwell, 1996), 53–54.

2. This concept is discussed much throughout the literature on Fanon. For two excellent recent treatments, see Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), and Hourya Bentouhami, "L'emprise du corps: Une réévaluation du corps propre chez Fanon à l'aune de la phénoménologie de Merleau-Ponty," *Les Cahiers Philosophiques* 3, no. 138 (2014): 34–46. Both, interestingly enough, focus on the phenomenological significance of the concept, which I will discuss below.

3. See the discussions in Robert Gooding-Williams's anthology *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising* (New York: Routledge, 1993), his collection of essays, *Look, a Negro!: Philosophical Essays on Race, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2005), and my *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

4. This word usually means "creeping," but the English word "crawling" is closer to what Fanon has in mind.

5. I took some liberty with the translation here. This phrase could be translated as "and my eardrums were fucked over by cannibalism."

6. I originally took the expression for African creole French, but I thank Nathalie Etoke for pointing out that it was petit-nègre, a form of simplified French developed by the French military overseeing Senegalese soldiers (see the manual, *Le français tel que le parlent nos tirailleurs sénégalais* [Paris: Imprimerie Militaire Universelle L. Fournier, 1916]), that was subsequently expanded and imposed on the indigenous populations of what became Franco-phone Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century.

7. For more discussion of the Banania product, see Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 162–63.

8. The French: “*Le beau nègre vous emmerde, madame!*” Literally: “The handsome *nègre* fucks you, madame!” Or, simply, “Fuck you!”

9. Fanon was not alone in his observations on scientific racism from even humanistic exemplars. See Robert V. Guthrie, *Even the Rat Was White: A Historical View of Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003).

10. See G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, with prefaces by Charles Hegel and the translator, J. Sibree, and a new introduction by C. J. Friedrich (New York: Dover, 1956), and for elaboration and critique see, e.g., Lewis R. Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1995), chap. 2, and *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009); Teshale Tibebu, *Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World History* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2011); and Babacar Camara, *Reason in History: Hegel and Social Change in Africa* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2011), among many others in the African Diasporic and critical theory traditions.

11. Histories of and debates on Négritude are many. For two excellent studies, see F. Abiola Irele, *The Négritude Moment: Explorations in Francophone African and Caribbean Literature and Thought* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2011), and Donna V. Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Negritude, Vitalism, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). See also T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), whose title speaks for itself, and for a study of the often misinterpreted Senghorian line, see Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *African Art as Philosophy: Senghor, Bergson, and the Idea of Negritude*, trans. Chike Jeffers (London: Seagull Books, 2011). And for extraordinarily concise and insightful essays, especially Aimé Césaire’s role in this movement, see Robin D. G. Kelly’s “A Poetics of Anticolonialism,” his introduction to Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 7–28, and P. Mabogo More, “The Intellectual Foundations of the Black Consciousness Movement,” in *Intellectual Traditions in South Africa: Ideas Individuals and Institutions*, ed. Peter Vale, Lawrence Hamilton, and Estelle Prinsloo (Pietermaritzburg, SA: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2014), 173–96.

12. Léopold Sédar Senghor, ed., *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, with the foreword “Orphée noir,” by Jean-Paul Sartre (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948).

13. See Irele, *Negritude Moment*, 13–20.

14. D. A. Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* (Bloomington:

Indiana University Press, 1994), 25. See also Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude Women*.

15. Irele, *Negritude Moment*, 27.

16. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*. See also More's discussion in "The Intellectual Foundations of the Black Consciousness Movement," 174–75.

17. Irele, *Negritude Movement*, 28.

18. See Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté: I* (Paris: Editions Seuil, 1964), 24. For Gobineau's classic, influential, and infamous formulation of racist tropes, see Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, preface by George L. Mosse (New York: H. Fertig, 1999), originally published in Paris in 1885. For the now classic critique of this unfortunately influential work, see Joseph-Anténor Firmin, *The Equality of Human Races: A Nineteenth-Century Haitian Scholar's Response to European Racism*, trans. Asselin Charles, with an introduction by Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (New York: Garland, 2000), originally published in Paris in 1885. This understudied classic (ignored in its time) has many affinities with Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. See Gordon, *Introduction to Africana Philosophy*, 56–63.

19. This essay is reprinted in Senghor, *Liberté: I*, 22–38.

20. Why *ancient Greece*? Subsequent Greeks seem incapable of having such an impact on thought. As Olúfẹ̀mi Táíwò is fond of reminding audiences in his public lectures: If the Greek soil was so fertile for philosophical reflection, why haven't there been great Greek philosophers in nearly two millennia? Perhaps subsequent Greeks are not only incapable but also simply don't care. I encourage those who doubt the latter to visit the archaeological site of what is most likely Plato's Academy. Unlike the Parthenon, celebrated with tickets of entry and robust investment in archaeological digs and research, the site of the Academy simply has a posted document and some marked-off area covered with olive pits and dog feces. For those unable to visit, see the web page *Gate to Greece's* page on the Academy: http://www.mesogeia.net/athens/places/platonacademy/platonacademy_en.html.

21. See Diagne, *African Art as Philosophy*, 45–96.

22. Circular arguments, though fallacious, are logically valid because it's impossible to have a true premise and a false conclusion since the latter is parasitic of the former. It's like arguing, to use a famous example from David Hume, that a gold mountain is gold. The fascinating thing is that it works also when each premise is false. Thus, the round-square is a round-square has the same result. Gobineau's is of the latter kind, where his premise and conclusion are false, but because it is circular, it makes his argument valid even though not true.

23. Sartre's text appears on ix–xliv of Senghor, ed., *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*.

24. Reiland Rabaka correctly calls this hybrid “Sartrean négritude” in his *Forms of Fanonism* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010), 72–88.

25. See Joby Fanon, *Frantz Fanon, My Brother: Doctor, Playwright, Revolutionary*, trans. Daniel Nethery (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2014), chap. 12, which includes these verses on page 61.

26. I added “as understood in the West” because of the debates about the formation of life *science*, with particular attention to biology as one of those and the order of knowledge that accompanies it. For an example of a critical discussion in this regard, see Oyerèrónké Oyèwùmí's *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

27. Michel Cournot, *Martinique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 13–14.

28. This dynamic is documented in nearly every eyewitness account of enslaved peoples. See, e.g., Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years as a Slave* (1853), recently reprinted as *Solomon Northup: The Complete Story of the Author of Twelve Years a Slave* (New York: Praeger, 2013). See also the film version, directed by Steve McQueen (2013). I here have in mind the enslaved woman Patsy, for whom the white master's desire occasioned more than sexual violence.

29. See, e.g., Gwen Bergner's “The Role of Gender in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 110, no. 1 (1995): 141–51.

30. Some of these issues emerged while he was a medical student, and others come to the fore during his final return to Martinique, which I discuss in the next chapter.

31. For the demographics of the patients in the facilities where Fanon worked, see Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum, 1985), Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, trans. Nadia Benabid (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), and David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* (New York: Picador, 2002). For contemporary research on the mental health of women of color, see, e.g., N. K. Grote, A. Zuckoff, H. Swartz, S. E. Bledsoe, and S. Geibel, “Engaging Women Who Are Depressed and Economically Disadvantaged in Mental Health Treatment,” *Social Work* 52, no. 4 (2007): 295–308. Also available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3025777/>. Interestingly enough, although race is not mentioned, the economically disadvantaged women studied in this article are from racial minorities, and the history the authors offered substantiates my point about past dangers of such women seeking treatment.

32. In fact, on the island of Jamaica, those women are called “Stellas.” See, e.g., Jacqueline Sánchez Taylor, “Dollars Are a Girl’s Best Friend? Female Tourists’ Sexual Behaviour in the Caribbean,” *Sociology* 35, no. 3 (2001): 749–64, where the author discusses “fantasy” as a commodity of exchange in sex tourism.

33. As long as fear could stimulate sexual excitement, it is overdetermined that the most feared men would become objects of such ambivalence. Given the criminalization of black men, especially with regard to rape, this is an easily substantiated thesis; for research, see, e.g., Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press, 2012).

34. For discussion of the existentially serious, see Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities International Press, 1995), chap. 6.

35. Fanon’s nausea dates back to the age of fourteen, when he had snuck in on an autopsy. See David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography*, 65. What, however, is “meaning” here? It is, as Miraj Desai explains, a phenomenological psychology of lived experience: “Fanon was influenced by Karl Jaspers and the phenomenological psychological tradition that placed emphasis on meaning, not on mere abstract facts or behaviors. . . . This intention involved understanding the meaning of the world, self, others, objects, media, race/ethnicity, political and economic structures, and collective traditions, as they are given in lived experience and the lived world.” “Psychology, the Psychological, and Critical Praxis: A Phenomenologist Reads Frantz Fanon,” *Theory and Psychology* 24, no. 1 (2014): 63.

36. Even contemporary demographics reveal that marriage between blacks and whites is the most rare. Although data are compiled the most in the United States, other countries, such as Brazil, are monitoring trends with much alarm being made particularly about marriages of black and white, even though they constitute in the United States, for example, fewer than 5 percent of all recent marriages, which means when added to the overall sum of marriages, most black married people in the United States are married to black people. See the 2011 US Population Study: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/11statab/pop.pdf>.

37. See *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley* (New York: Ballantine, 1965). Manning Marable pays special attention to this phenomenon in his *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin, 2011), which stimulated critical responses from scholars that include bell hooks, who is far from homophobic; see her *Writing beyond Race: Living Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2013), especially 71–80. The response hooks offers to

Marable's portrait of Malcolm X's sexual experiences with men is similar to Fanon's about his Martinican countrymen in Paris: Sex with men is not necessarily a case of sexual preference, especially where interracial power relations limit the options available to some men versus others. This debate will no doubt continue.

38. Michel Salomon, "D'un Juif à des Nègres," *Présence Africaine*, no. 5 (October 1949): 774–76. Fanon cites this text in *Pn*, 163.

39. See Brian Locke, "The Impact of the Black–White Binary on Asian-American Identity," *Radical Philosophy Review* 1, no. 2 (1998): 98–125. See also his *Racial Stigma on the Hollywood Screen from World War II to the Present: The Orientalist Buddy Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

40. See, for example, Andrea Dworkin's *Intercourse* (New York: Basic Books, 2006) and Edmund White's award-winning *Genet: A Biography* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

41. See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, vol. 2, chaps. 3, 4, and 9. Cf. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 28.

42. Matthieu Renault, "'Corps à corps': Frantz Fanon's Erotics of National Liberation," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy—Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française* 19, no 1 (2011): 52.

43. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (1807; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). The importance of this work for modern studies of enslavement and freedom cannot be overestimated. Among the genealogy of thinkers of which Fanon is a part, engagement with it is a necessary ritual. See, e.g., Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Gordon, *Introduction to Africana Philosophy*, in addition to *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*, especially chap. 2; and Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*.

44. The female role of Lord is a complicated matter here, since she often assumes the role in a hierarchy with a male Lord who is part of a system of lordship, which Fanon does not consider but is explored by Frederick Douglass in his discussion of the abuse he received from his master's wife. See Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage, My Freedom*, and Abdul JanMohamed's discussion, especially in relation to Hegel, in *The Death-Bound-Subject: Richard Wright's Archaeology of Death* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

45. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. with notes by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967). For discussion, see Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism*; Nigel Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003); Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge,

Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Lou Turner, “On the Difference between the Hegelian and Fanonian Dialectic of Lordship and Bondage,” in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renée T. White (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2006), 134–51.

46. For discussions of the demand for bodies without points of view, see Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism*, chaps. 14–16.

47. See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Scribner’s Sons, Collier Book, 1958).

48. These themes of suffering and redemption in the possibility the future offers are themes to which he will return in *The Damned of the Earth*.

49. See, e.g., Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and Repetition*, ed. and trans. with introduction and notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

50. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. with an intro. by Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), 113, and for elaboration, see Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism*, part 1, and Lewis R. Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence: Living Thought in Trying Times* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm, 2006), introduction.

51. Chester Fontenot Jr., “Frantz Fanon: The Revolutionary,” *First World* 2, no. 3 (1979): 25 and 27.

52. The more familiar phenomenological language is the parenthesizing or bracketing of the natural attitude or naturalism, as Desai formulates it: “Fanon indeed relied on principles consistent with approaches that free themselves of naturalistic biases and instead respond to the human demands of the subject matter through an exploration of experience, meaning, embodiment, temporality, and so forth. This non-naturalistic methodological turn places Fanon in consonance with the traditions springing from both Dilthey and Husserl who criticized naturalism vis-à-vis psychological life.” “Psychology, the Psychological, and Critical Praxis,” 65.

53. See Maurice Natanson, *The Erotic Bird: Phenomenology in Literature*, with a foreword by Judith Butler (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

54. For elaboration, see, for e.g., Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*; Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*; Bentouhami, “L’emprise du corps”; and Desai, “Psychology, the Psychological, and Critical Praxis.”

55. I cannot develop this claim here because of the limits of space. Interested readers may wish to consult the many discussions in *The C. L. R. James Journal* of how Caribbean thinkers write. See especially the set of issues since 2001, for discussions of Wilson Harris, Edoard Glissant, Sylvia Wynter, C. L. R. James, Fanon, and many others.

56. Jane Anna Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Fanon* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 16; see also 5–7, where Gordon shows that creolization is a distinct form of mixture not identical with multiculturalism, hybridity, and interdisciplinarity. See also Michael Monahan, *The Creolizing Subject: Race, Reason, and the Politics of Purity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), which offers, through resources from Caribbean thought, a critique of the politics of purity. Some readers may, however, wonder if W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1903), which integrates spirituals, along with bars of musical notation, and draws on resources from different disciplines and genres discounts this thesis of the uniqueness of Fanon's text. Du Bois's use of spirituals, musical notation, lyrical form, essays, and integration of ideas from many disciplines and communities certainly meets criteria of creolization, and *The Souls of Black Folk* is also the birth of a special text that created a whole genre of writing on race, of which Fanon's appears at first to be a descendant; however, Du Bois's existential tone, while poetic, is gentle and serious. Fanon's is, however, at many times brutal and intentionally so. He is *fighting*. Du Bois also fought, and even more stridently as he aged, and both authors wrote in what could be called a blues form (see my discussion of the blues in the next chapter), but the use of humor and the scale of metatextual critique—of the unusual relationship of the author to his own text—is what differentiates Fanon's work as something unseen before. Here one could even think of European existentialists such as Søren Kierkegaard, who used techniques of what he called “indirection,” and Friedrich Nietzsche, who claimed to have been breaking idols, whose ideas and approaches also appear in *Black Skin, White Masks*, but that ironic relationship of failure, that tension between the author of versus the one *in* the work and what they manifest politically and even intellectually places Fanon's work in a class of its own.

57. See Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence*.

4. REVOLUTIONARY THERAPY

1. For an account of this unfortunately brutal history, see Jean-Michel Bégué, “French Psychiatry in Algeria (1830–1962): From Colonial to Transcultural,” *History of Psychiatry* 7, no. 28 (1996): 533–48.

2. E. Stern, “Médecine psychosomatique,” *Psyché* (January–February 1949): 129. This article is based on the ideas of the famed psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Heinrich Meng. For a summary of Meng's life and thought, see Adolph Friedmann, “Heinrich Meng: Psychoanalysis and Mental Hygiene,” in *Psychoanalytical Pioneers*, ed. Franz Alexander, Samuel Eisenstein, and Martin Grotjahn (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transactions, 1995), 333–41. See also Mazi Al-

len, “A Statement of Conscience: Frantz Fanon’s *Le Syndrôme Nord-Africain*,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 5, nos. 3 and 4 (2007): 83–88.

3. Fanon is here using the familiar and diminutive *tu* and *toi* instead of *vous* to stress, through belittling, the object of his condemnation.

4. Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum, 1985), 208.

5. Clément Mbom, “Frantz Fanon,” in *Multicultural Writers Since 1945: An A-to-Z Guide*, ed. Alba della Fazia Amoia, Bettina Liebowitz Knapp (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2004), 212.

6. Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, trans. Nadia Benabid (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), 19–20. Hereafter cited as *Portrait*.

7. Patrick Ehlen, *Frantz Fanon: A Spiritual Biography* (New York: Crossroads, 2000), 104–5. Hereafter cited as *Spiritual Biography*.

8. Cherki, *Portrait*, 93. For Tosquelles’s thoughts on those years with Fanon in his own words, see “Frantz Fanon à Saint-Alban,” in *Frantz Fanon: Par les textes de l’époque*, ed. La Fondation Frantz-Fanon, preface by Achille Mbembe, introduction by Mireille Fanon-Mendès-France (Paris: Les Petit Matins, 2012), 75–89; original in *L’Information Psychiatrique* 51, no. 10 (1975).

9. Fanon wasn’t alone with this observation. For a study of its history among other black psychiatrists and psychologists, see Robert V. Guthrie, *Even the Rat Was White: A Historical View of Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003).

10. Freud’s 1930 classic in its original German is *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (“Discomfort in Culture”). The well-known English title erases the radicality of the book as “civilization” (city-dwelling), which is not as foundational as culture. Fanon’s subject—the human being—makes no sense outside of the framework of culture, as his preference for sociogenic analysis suggests.

11. Isaac Julien, *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask* (Normal Films, 1996).

12. Cherki, *Portrait*, 59.

13. Miraj Desai, “Psychology, the Psychological, and Critical Praxis,” *Theory and Psychology* 24, no. 1 (2014): 63.

14. Many of these articles are now available in English in Frantz Fanon, *Decolonizing Madness: The Psychiatric Writings of Frantz Fanon*, trans. Lisa Damon, ed. Nigel Gibson, with preface by Alice Cherki and afterword by Roberto Beneduce (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Cherki also offers concise summaries of these papers in her *Portrait*; see especially her endnotes. She also summarizes prevailing, colonial models of psychiatry in the country at that time (61–62). See also Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*, 227–28.

15. Necrometrics.com compiled the various estimates, cross-referenced them, and checked with other authorities, and concluded that the lack of consensus makes these numbers rough approximations. See <http://necrometrics.com/20c30ok.htm#Algeria>. For a historical study, see, for example, Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), esp. 44. And for discussions of talking about such terrible historical events, including the history of French colonization of Algeria, see Patricia M. E. Lorcin, ed., *Algeria and France (1800–2000): Identity, Memory, Nostalgia* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006).

16. I'm referring, of course, to Karl Jaspers's classic *The Question of German Guilt*, with a new introduction by Joseph W. Koerski, S.J., trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

17. Ehlen, *Frantz Fanon: A Spiritual Biography*, 137.

18. This hatred is ironic since there is not only a fairly large Afro-Arab presence in the Arab world but also, depending on how "race" is interpreted, Arab people could properly be conceived of as simply mixed Afro-Asiatic people. Much of this depends on how one understands the history of Arab peoples and also their prehistory (that is, the people from whom the ethnic designation "Arab" emerged). See, for example, Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (New York: Warner Books, 1991); John McHugo, *A Concise History of the Arabs* (New York: Free Press, 2013); and Charles Finch III, *Echoes of the Old Darkland: Themes from the African Eden* (Decatur, Ga.: Khenti, 1991), chaps. 1 and 5. See also W. Montgomery Watt and Pierre Cachia's short paper, "Who Is an Arab?" University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center: http://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/Who_16629.html.

19. For an annotated list of the participants, see *CMS Magazine* (5 November 2007): <http://csmsmagazine.org/?p=870>. I learned of George Lamming's closeness to Fanon from conversations with the former, but additional sources include Cherki, *Portrait*, 88.

20. See Cherki, *Portrait*, and Mbom, "Frantz Fanon," 212.

21. Fanon is not, however, a cultural relativist, as Ato Sekyi-Otu shows in *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 198.

22. For more on Boas, see Lewis R. Gordon, "Franz Boas in Africana Philosophy," in *Indigenous Visions: Rediscovering the World of Franz Boas*, ed. Isaiah Lorado Wilner and Ned Blackhawk (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2015), and Vernon Williams, *Rethinking Race: Franz Boas and His Contemporaries* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996).

23. For more on racist culture, see David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Cul-*

ture: *Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), and cf. Lewis R. Gordon, “Black Existence in Philosophy of Culture,” *Diogenes* (October 2014): <http://dio.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/10/14/0392192113505409.extract> (originally “L’existence noire dans la philosophie de la culture,” *Diogenes*, no. 235–36 (July 2011): 133–47).

24. I kept the original spelling from the French text, but there is no Toymynbee to be found anywhere, so it is presumed that Fanon is really referring to Arnold J. Toynbee. For the same conclusion, see Jeremy F. Lane, *Jazz and Machine-Age Imperialism: Music, “Race,” and Intellectuals in France, 1918–1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 207.

25. Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, vol. 1, trans. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson, with revisions and a foreword by Howard A. Johnson (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), 19.

26. For classic treatments, see Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: William and Morrow, 1963); Ralph Ellison, *Going to the Territory* (New York: Vintage, 1987) and *Shadow and Act* (New York: Vintage, 1964); and for more recent discussions, see Lane, *Jazz and Machine-Age Imperialism*; Lewis R. Gordon, “Of Tragedy and the Blues in an Age of Decadence: Thoughts on Nietzsche and African America,” in *Critical Affinities: Nietzsche and the African American Experience*, ed. Jacqueline Renee Scott and Todd Franklin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 75–97; and Jesse R. Steinberg and Abrol Fairweather, eds., *Blues—Philosophy for Everyone: Thinking Deep about Feeling Low* (Malden, Mass.: Willey Blackwell, 2012).

27. In Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Vintage, 1964), 78–79.

28. An observation also made by Peter Worsley, “Frantz Fanon and the ‘Lumpenproletariat,’” esp. 195–96, and F. Abiola Irele, *The Negritude Moment: Explorations in Francophone African and Caribbean Literature and Thought*.

29. See, e.g., Cherki, *Portrait*, 125.

30. See *Les damnés de la terre*, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, presentation de Gérard Chaliand (Paris: François Maspero éditeur S.A.R.L, 1961), 291 (hereafter *Di*), and for discussion, see also Lane, *Jazz and Machine-Age Imperialism*, 190.

31. Cherki, *Portrait*, 90.

32. Quoted in Ehlen, *Spiritual Biography*, 140.

33. The details of this period are addressed well by Cherki, *Portrait*, who was also, as Fanon’s student and subsequent colleague, a participant, an eyewitness to the struggles, innovations, success, triumphs, setbacks, and failures during this period. See her *Fanon*, 100–139.

34. For recent concerns at the ground level, see, for example, Tom Little, “Beyond Mercenaries: Racism in North Africa,” *Think Africa Press* (27 May

2011): <http://thinkafricapress.com/libya/north-africa-sub-saharan-africas-racist-neighbor>.

35. Sources are many, but see, e.g., Ivan Van Sertima, ed., *Golden Age of the Moor* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1992), and Nehemia Levtzion and Jay Spaulding, eds., *Medieval West Africa: Views from Arab Scholars and Merchants* (Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiedner, 2003).

36. I place *Semitic* in quotation marks because of the problematic nature of the term, which emerged from the efforts in eighteenth-century French and German scholarship to organize Arabic, Aramaic, and Hebrew under a single linguistic nomenclature eventually crystallized in the nineteenth century in the work of the French scholar Ernest Renan. That today it is used in an almost exclusively *racialized* way to refer to white Jews speaks volumes about its abuse. For discussion, see Lewis R. Gordon, Ramón Grosfoguel, and Eric Mielants, “Global Anti-Semitism in World-Historical Perspective: An Introduction,” *Journal of Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 7, no. 2 (2009): 1–14, and Lewis R. Gordon, *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 26–28.

37. See Mbom, “Frantz Fanon,” 213.

38. See Cherki, *Portrait*, 146.

39. Frantz Fanon, “Fondement réciproque de la culture nationale et des luttes de libération,” *Présence Africaine* 24–25 (February–May 1959): 82–89.

40. For a history of this group, see Antoine Méléro, *La main rouge: L’armée secrète de la République* (Paris: Éditions du Rocher, 1997).

41. This quotation is from Cherki, *Portrait*, 131. Memmi subsequently wrote a polemic against Fanon: “*La vie impossible de Frantz Fanon*,” *L’Esprit* (September 1971): 248–47, translated into English by Thomas Cassirer and G. Michael Twomey as “The Impossible Life of Frantz Fanon,” *Massachusetts Review* 14, no. 1 (1973): 9–39. Césaire, however, left us with a moving, succinct account, “La révolte de Frantz Fanon,” in *Frantz Fanon: Par les textes de l’époque*, ed. La Fondation Frantz-Fanon, 109–13.

42. “Investments” in this sense has psychoanalytical implications, as Abdul JanMohamed points out in the introduction to his anthology *Reconsidering Social Identification: Race, Gender, Class and Caste* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2011).

43. Even the eyewitnesses don’t seem to agree on the facts, as the variously interviewed people in the biographies, including some of the authors, who were also witnesses, attest. This is evident in the various informants’ statements in Julien’s film and Djemas’s, as well as in Bulhan’s, Cauté’s, Cherki’s, Ehlen’s, Geismar’s, and Gendzier’s biographies, to name some.

44. See Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” in *Dissemination*, trans. with

introduction and notes by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

45. For a review of many of these debates, see T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminisms* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

46. Cf. Drucilla Cornell, “The Secret behind the Veil: A Reinterpretation of ‘Algeria Unveiled,’” *Philosophia Africana* 4, no. 2 (2001): 27–35.

47. See, for example, Penny Colman, *Rosie the Riveter: Women Working on the Home Front in WWII* (New York: Crown Books, 1995).

48. Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983), and Assia Djebar, *A Sister to Scheherazade* (London: Quartet, 1988) and *So Vast the Prison*, trans. Betsy Wing (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999). See also Nada Elia, *Trances, Dances and Vociferations: Agency and Resistance in African Women’s Narratives* (New York: Garland, 2001).

49. For elaboration, see Nigel Gibson, “Jammin’ the Airways and Tuning into the Revolution: The Dialectics of the Radio in *L’An V de la révolution algérienne*,” in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renée T. White, eds., *Fanon: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 273–82.

50. Jacques Postel, “Frantz Fanon—Looking Back,” *History of Psychiatry* 7, no. 28 (1996): 487.

51. For discussion of the general will in Rousseau’s and Fanon’s thought, see Jane Anna Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Fanon* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 95–161.

52. Frantz Fanon and Charles Gèromini, “L’hospitalisation de jour en psychiatrie, valeur et limites, II: Considérations doctrinales,” *La Tunisie Médicale* 38, no. 10 (1959).

53. Sartre later faced a similar situation during the 1967 Arab–Israeli War. See Yoav Di-Capua, “Arab Existentialism: An Invisible Chapter in the Intellectual History of Decolonization,” *American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (2012): 1088.

5. COUNSELING THE DAMNED

1. This article is available in *Pour la révolution africaine: Écrits politiques*, ed. Joseph Fanon (Paris: François Maspero, 1964); in English as Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

2. So concerned was he about his appearance that he often changed suits while on duty as the chief psychiatric officer so as not to appear overcome by the North African heat. See Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, trans.

Nadia Benabid (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006). For a wonderful array of photographs of Fanon from his adolescent years through to those in his last, see the special edition of *Sans Frontière* (February 1982), which was a memorial issue at the twentieth anniversary of his death.

3. Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum, 1985), 34.

4. *Ibid.*

5. The history of racism is such that not all whites are white enough, which often led to curious anomalies in countries with antimiscegenation laws. See, e.g., Ruth Frankenberg's *The Social Construction of Whiteness: White Women, Race Matters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

6. See Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, *Race and Racism* (Lanham, Md.: Altamira Press, 2006). See also Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983).

7. Although the climate is much improved because of the casting away or overturning of antimiscegenation laws in many countries, the level of tolerance at the level of civil society varies across countries, and the fact remains that the lowest number of mixed racial marriages are, as we have seen, those between black and white.

8. See Patrick Ehlen, *Frantz Fanon: A Spiritual Biography* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 156–57. Claude Lanzmann and Marcel Pèju were intellectuals who had fought for the French Resistance in World War II and who were dedicated to the Algerian struggle for national liberation. Lanzmann is today most known for his work as a documentary filmmaker, which included the Holocaust documentary *Shoah* (1985).

9. Jacques Roumain, *Bois-d'èbène* (Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Imp. H. Deschamps, 1945), reprinted in 2003 in Montreal by Mèmoire d'encrier. Page references are to the 2003 reprint. See also Peter Worsley, "Frantz Fanon and the 'Lumpenproletariat,'" *Socialist Register* 9 (1972): 197.

10. Roumain, *Bois-d'èbène*, 33–34.

11. Fanon uses this term to signify immobilization, a collapse of time, in various places of *The Damned of the Earth*, see, e.g., 110. For an analysis of Fanon's theory of petrification, that is, stagnated existence, see Douglas Ficek, "Reflections on Fanon and Petrification," in *Living Fanon*, ed. Nigel Gibson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 75–84.

12. This evocation of drama is not accidental in Fanon's writings, as shown in Joby Fanon, *Frantz Fanon, My Brother: Doctor, Playwright, Revolutionary*, trans. Daniel Nethery (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2014), chap. 12, "The Playwright," 57–62, and in Keithley Philmore Woolward, "Toward a Performative Theory of Liberation: Theatre, Theatricality and 'Play' in the Work of

Frantz Fanon” (PhD diss. in French, New York University, 2008). See also Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon’s Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), esp. 4–5; Alejandro J. De Oto’s *Fanon: Política del sujeto post-colonial*, chap. 2; and Worsley’s “Frantz Fanon and the ‘Lumpenproletariat.’”

13. I offer a developed discussion of this thesis in *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1995), chap. 4.

14. Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon’s Dialectic of Experience*, 55.

15. Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, trans. Tristram Hunt (New York: Penguin Classics, 2010), and *Anti-Duhring: Herr Eugen Duhring’s Revolution in Science* (New York: International Publishers, 1966), part 2, chap. 3. Cf. Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, presentation de Gérard Chaliand (Paris: François Maspero, 1961), with my references being to the 1991 edition published in Paris by Éditions Gallimard, 95–98, 254 (hereafter *Di*).

16. The importance of theorizing and developing this challenge continues, as Olufémi Táíwò’s recent interventions attest: *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010) and *Africa Must Be Modern: A Manifesto* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

17. Nigel C. Gibson, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa: From Steve Biko to Abahlali base Mjondolo* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 207.

18. This argument is analyzed in detail in Jane Anna Gordon’s *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Fanon* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

19. Aimé Césaire, “La révolte de Frantz Fanon,” in *Frantz Fanon: Par les textes de l’époque*, ed. La Fondation Frantz-Fanon, 110. Originally published in *Jeune Afrique* (December 13–19, 1961).

20. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 482.

21. See, especially, Jack Woddiss’s *New Theories of Revolution: A Commentary on the Views of Frantz Fanon, Régis Debray, and Herbert Marcuse* (New York: International Publishers, 1972).

22. Worsley, “Frantz Fanon and the ‘Lumpenproletariat,’” 208–9. This surplus of labor has led to the return and increase of brutal practices of exploitation, including enslavement, across the globe; see, for example, Joel Quirk and Darshan Vigneswaran, eds., *Slavery, Migration and Contemporary Bondage in Africa* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2013), Jane Anna Gordon, “Degrees of Statelessness: Vulnerability and Political Capital,” *Journal of Contemporary Thought* 32 (Winter 2010): 17–39, and “Theorizing Contemporary Practices of

Slavery: A Portrait of the Old in the New,” *Scribd* (November 21, 2013): <http://www.scribd.com/doc/185968288/Theorizing-Contemporary-Practices-of-Slavery-Gordon>

23. See Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

24. For detailed discussion of Rousseau’s concept of the general will and Fanon’s innovations in terms of national consciousness see Jane Anna Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory*, chaps. 3 and 4, pp. 95–162.

25. E. Franklin Frazier, *Bourgeoisie Noir* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1955), and available in English as *Black Bourgeoisie: The Book That Brought the Shock of Self-Revelation to Black America* (New York: Free Press, 1997).

26. See also Amílcar Cabral’s *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings*, with an introduction by Basil Risbridger Davidson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), and Olúfemi Taiwó, “Cabral,” in *A Companion to the Philosophers*, ed. Robert L. Arrington (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999), 5–12.

27. Patricia M. E. Lorcin, Introduction to *Algeria and France, 1800–2000*, xxii. Colonization of the so-called New World offers many instances, as shown in C. L. R. James’s *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1989), chap. 1, “The Property”; see also, more recently, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War!: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008), and George Ciccariello-Maher, “Jumpstarting the Decolonial Engine: Symbolic Violence from Fanon to Chávez,” *Theory & Event* 13, no. 1 (2010): https://www.academia.edu/733141/Jumpstarting_the_Decolonial_Engine_Symbolic_Violence_from_Fanon_to_Chavez?login=&email_was_taken=true.

28. This concern of the difficulty of overcoming a world premised on violence is subsequently taken up by a variety of writers on life in postcolonies. For some examples, see Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), Leonhard Praeg, *The Geometry of Violence* (Stellenbosch, S.A.: SUN PreSS, 2007), and Jane Anna Gordon and Lewis R. Gordon, *Of Divine Warning: Reading Disaster in the Modern Age* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm, 2009).

29. For more on this point, see Jane Anna Gordon and Lewis R. Gordon, *Of Divine Warning*, chaps. 2 and 4.

30. Representative works of all three are W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (1935; New York: Free Press, 1998); C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1989); and Martin Luther King Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait* (New York: Signet Classics, 2000).

31. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans.

Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 12. For more discussion, see Jane Anna Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory*, 136–37, and Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, 85–86.

32. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 5–15. For discussion of affinities between Fanon and Gramsci, see, for example, Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, 148–49, and Hourya Bentouhami, “De Gramsci à Fanon, un marxisme décentré,” *Actuel Marx*, no. 55 (2014): 99–118.

33. For more on the distinction between nationalism and national consciousness, see Jane Anna Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory*. See also Vivaldi Jean-Marie, *Fanon: Collective Ethics and Humanism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 145–59, the chapter titled “Emergence of National Culture as the Ultimate Form of Humanism.”

34. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, vol. 1, “Inferno,”* trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), bk. 33, line 139.

35. For more on this line of reasoning, see Lewis R. Gordon, “Justice Otherwise: Thoughts on *Ubuntu*,” in *Ubuntu: Curating the Archive*, ed. Leonhard Praeg (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2014), 10–26; and for examples of such imaginative normative pursuits in specific global challenges, see, for example, Drucilla Cornell, *Law and Revolution in South Africa: Ubuntu, Dignity, and the Struggle for Constitutional Transformation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014); Oscar Guardiola-Rivera, *What If Latin America Ruled the World?: How the South Will Take the North through the 21st Century* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2010); Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011); Julia Suárez-Krabbe, *Race, Rights and Rebels: Alternatives beyond Human Rights and Development* (London, UK: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2015). See also Boaventura de Sousa Santos, ed., *Democratizing Democracy: Beyond the Liberal Democratic Canon* (London: Verso, 2005), and *Another Knowledge Is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies* (London: Verso, 2007).

36. Sartre's thought and activism against anti-Arabism had an enormous influence among Arab intellectuals at the time. See Yoav Di-Capua, “Arab Existentialism: An Invisible Chapter in the Intellectual History of Decolonization,” *American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (2012): 1061–91.

37. For a critical discussion of Sartrean Négritude and Fanon's response, see Reiland Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010), 72–82.

38. See his appendix to the notebooks and my discussion in *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities International Press, 1995).

39. Ronald Hayman, *Sartre: A Life* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1987), 384–85. See also Ehlen, *Frantz Fanon: A Spiritual Biography*, 159–61.

40. See Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969).

CONCLUSION: REQUIEM FOR THE MESSENGER

1. Peter Geismar, *Fanon* (New York: Dial Press, 1971), 182.
2. Patrick Ehlen recounts the complicated cat-and-mouse relationship between Fanon and Iselin throughout this ordeal; see his *Frantz Fanon: A Spiritual Biography* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 158–64.
3. See *ibid.*, 165–66; Ehlen’s translation is “Last night they put me through the washing machine again.”
4. See, e.g., Sebastian de Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de lengua* (1611).
5. For discussion of this double bind on black existence, see Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, *Of Divine Warning: Reading Disaster in the Modern Age* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm, 2009), 84.
6. Richard Cavendish, *A History of Magic* (London: Arkana, 1990), 2.
7. Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), 165.
8. Quoted in Joby Fanon, *Frantz Fanon, My Brother: Doctor, Playwright, Revolutionary*, trans. Daniel Nethery (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2014), 61.
9. See Joby Fanon, *Frantz Fanon, My Brother*, 100–1. The address?
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