

The copyright of this thesis rests with the University of Cape Town. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

RELIGION IN THE WORK OF FRANTZ FANON

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

FEDERICO G. SETTLER
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

2009

DEDICATED TO

MY CHILDREN,
JETHRO, GEORGIA AND MO

AND MY MOTHER,
MARIA M. SETTLER

University of Cape Town

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
INTRODUCTION	
Fanon, Religion and Modernity	1
Fanon's Modernity	6
Understanding Religion	9
Modernity and Postcolonialism	16
The Ambivalence of the Sacred	22
Chapter Outline	27
Chronology	30
CHAPTER ONE	
Fanon and Fanonism	32
Childhood and Development	34
Political Development	42
Fanon's Writing	46
Fanonism	62
CHAPTER TWO	
Theoretical Horizons	76
Negritude: Césaire, Sartre and Fanon in Conversation	86
Blackness and Modernity: Wright, Fanon and Nativism	107
Memmi: On Being Slaves and Monsters	115

CHAPTER THREE

Formative Engagements with Race, Class and Religion	122
Colonial Martinique	129
Religion and Race in Colonial Martinique	138
Socio-political Conditions of Childhood	147
Fanon's Forte de France	156

CHAPTER FOUR

Engagements with Christianity, Islam and Indigenous Traditions	164
Fanon on Catholicism	169
Fanon on Islam	176
Fanon on Indigenous Religion	187
Engaging Fanon on Religion	199

CHAPTER FIVE

Ethics and Aesthetics of Transformation	213
Epic of Transformation	218
Of Therapy and Transformation	223
History inscribed on the Black Body	228
National Culture as Sacred Work	243

CONCLUSION	249
-------------------	-----

BIBLIOGRAPHY	260
---------------------	-----

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I primarily would like to thank my supervisor at the University of Cape Town, Professor David Chidester for the outstanding academic support and advice offered during the course of this study.

A special thanks to my family for their continuing love and support throughout this academic endeavour.

For all their encouragement and support, I would like to thank my colleagues and friends at the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town and the Department of African Studies and African-American Studies at Harvard University.

I would like to acknowledge the peer support of my sister Ms. Henrietta Settler, and of Ms. Nina Hoel, a colleague at the Institute for Comparative Religions in Southern Africa at the University of Cape Town. I would also like to acknowledge the skill of Ms. Rosamund Haden who patiently assisted me with editing this thesis during its various stages.

For the timeous and efficient administration of funds for the period of study I want to thank the UCT Postgraduate Funding Office.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the generous financial support of the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa, The A.W. Mellon Foundation for the support though the UCT-administered Doctoral Fellowship in Humanities Programme, and the Harvard South Africa Fellowship Programme for their sponsorship of a reading period at Harvard University.

Opinions and conclusions arrived at are those of the author.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores Frantz Fanon's engagement with religion, and its impact on his theories of race and racism. As a cultural theorist and political activist with strong Marxian-humanist sympathies, Fanon asserted that, as an irrational force, religion anaesthetised the oppressed and inhibited the recovery of the black self. In this study I draw on critical and analytical work in the fields of religion, African studies, and postcolonial theory to interrogate the significance of the black body in the production of his aesthetic of transformation.

To understand Fanon's engagements with religion I examine the social and political contexts of his native Martinique and his adopted Algeria, both countries which are defined by strict social and religious hierarchies. Through this focus on his engagement with Christianity, Islam and indigenous traditions in both Martinique and Algeria I argue that, while Fanon was ambivalent about the usefulness of religion in the anti-colonial struggle and the recovery of the black self, he nonetheless came to recognise the role of religion in producing narratives of the sacred that would cohere and motivate the colonized in their struggle against racist oppression.

Finally, I argue that Fanon circumvents his ambivalence towards religion by elevating the significance of the enslaved and colonized body, as a sacred instrument of revolt and recovery. This thesis concludes that it is only through the production of such narratives of the sacred that Fanon is able to expel religion from the recovery of the black self and the inauguration of the new nation, while retaining traces of the sacred in his aesthetic of transformation.

INTRODUCTION

FANON, RELIGION AND MODERNITY

This study is situated at the intersection of the disciplines of religion and postcolonial theory. Within postcolonial studies, Frantz Fanon emerged as a powerful influence and has become the cornerstone of much intellectual inquiry. This thesis focuses on the persistence of the sacred in the postcolony and the question of why religion continued to be a significant force in postcolonial Africa.

My curiosity was spiked by two particular themes that ran through Fanon studies. The first was the way Fanon was revered and held up as an irrefutable icon of African nationalism and anti-colonial revolutionary struggles. The second was Fanon's adamant humanism in the context of the, religion-inflected, Algerian anti-colonial struggle. His work has influenced generations of scholars and activists across the globe, provoking countless references to his texts, particularly *The Wretched of the Earth*, which was referred to as a "revolutionary's bible".¹

Frantz Fanon represents a social, political and cultural icon and has been invoked and claimed by a wide range of disciplines within the humanities. He has been studied as a revolutionary and social theorist, whilst others have offered in-depth studies of his political theories, not to mention his theories on race and racism. Numerous books have addressed Fanon's view on violence and the impact it had on a wide range of social and political movements the world over. With the advent of postcolonial studies we have seen the return of Fanon as cultural theorist, and social visionary - an idea of Fanon popularized

¹Peter Geismar, *Fanon: The Revolutionary as Prophet* (New York: Dial Press, 1971), 2; see also Hussein Abdulahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), 6.

because of his transnational experience, his sense of social and racial dislocation, and his idea of global solidarity.²

While Fanon has been a much celebrated advocate of the black struggle for self-determination, recent developments in postcolonial studies have seen the revision of Fanon by subaltern, gender and queer scholars.³ These revisions of recovered voices have marked an exciting turn in postcolonial studies, which promises to now produce more realistic and comprehensive historiographies. Whilst not undermining the significance of the contributions made by icons such as Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, Simone de Beauvoir, and Nelson Mandela, postcolonial studies has opened the possibility to consider the full extent of the values and ideas inherited from these leaders of struggle.

The body of material on Frantz Fanon is immense, but little has been written on religion in the contexts of his life and his work. Considering the significance of his work for subsequent generations and his vision of the postcolony I believe our current global struggle, with the meaning of religion in public culture, demands that we interrogate the assumptions of icons like Fanon as they pertain to religion. This study promises to offer a unique perspective on Frantz Fanon by focusing on the meaning of religion in the context of postcolonial studies.

A number of outstanding biographies about Fanon have been written since his death. They range from the enthusiastic, apologetic and intimate portrayal of Fanon by Alice Cherki, published in 2000 (translated to English in 2006) to David Macey's comprehensive and detailed history published in the same year under the title, *Fanon: A Life*. Earlier texts on Fanon such as Bulhan, Perinbaum and

² Homi Bhabha, "Remembering Fanon," *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Oxford: Polity Press, 2003), 180.

³ Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminisms* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997) and Francoise Verges "Chains of Madness, Chains of Colonialism," *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read (Seattle: Bay Press, 1996)

Geismar tended to focus on the revolutionary period, but since Homi Bhabha's esoteric introduction to the 1986 edition of *Black Skin, White Masks* a number of books have been written within which Fanon emerges as theorist of culture, postcolonialism and resistance. Lewis Gordon's *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man* (1995) and Ato Sekyi-Otu's *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (1996) are two such texts. While Sekyi-Otu situated Fanon in the context of Africa, Gordon focused on the existential and phenomenological currents that informed Fanon's anti-racism. More recently, Nigel Gibson has produced, *Fanon: A Postcolonial Imagination* (2003), within which he considered the prospects and perils of both negritude and nationalist resistance. Grounded in Fanon's theorization of racism and antiracism, Gibson suggested that there is an "unstable, critical and creative element" at the heart of Fanon's thought. This study is situated at such an intersection of the contextual and the theoretical so as to produce a nuanced and critical reading of Fanon – at least as it pertains to religion and the idea of the sacred.

Fanon regarded religion as essentially pre-modern and, as such, he assumed that the onset of modernity marked the decline of religion. He argued that religion, whether through established faith communities or indigenous traditions would undermine the struggle against oppression. While he acknowledged Islam and Catholicism as the great religions, he suggested of religion that:

the atmosphere of myth and magic frightens me and so takes on an undoubted reality. By terrifying me, it integrates me in the traditions and history of my district or of my tribe, and at the same time it reassures me, it gives me a status, as it were identification papers.⁴

Against this background, I set out to understand why, despite his secular humanism, religion persisted in Fanon's works – an undertaking which some

⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Penguin, 1967), 43.

scholars may challenge as being merely an attempt to 'sacralise' Fanon's humanism. His popularity and the passionate following his writing enjoyed is part reflected by the black nationalist claim that "every brother on a rooftop has a copy" of his famous text, *The Wretched of the Earth*.⁵ Given such popularity, coupled with the strident and single-minded zeal of his writing, it would be relatively easy to engage in such sacralising of Fanon as a cultural icon. But sacralising Fanon is not the intention of this thesis.

It would also be reasonable to view this study as an attempt to raise the value of religion in the field of Fanonism. Considering the widespread Catholicism on Martinique and the Islamism in the Algerian struggle, scholars from various perspectives,⁶ such as Michael Lackey and Marie-Aimee Helie-Lucas have sought to suggest that there are more than mere hints of these traditions in Fanon's work and have argued that religious traditions, whether in denial or inclusion, played a central role in Fanon's aesthetic of transformation.⁷ In fact, in his essay "Pitfalls of National Consciousness" Fanon wrote about Catholicism and Islam as the two great revealed religions. One cannot, however, infer from his acknowledgement of these traditions that he necessarily believed them to possess any intrinsic value or social benefit.

While I consider the range of engagements that Fanon had to religious constituencies and practices, the aim of this study is not to 'prove' the persistence of religion, nor is it to undermine Fanon's humanism by

⁵ A remark attributed to the late Eldrige Cleaver, a leader of the Black Panther Movement in the United States see David Macey, *Fanon: A Life* (London: Granta, 2000), 24. also Bill Marshall and Christina Johnston, *France and the Americas* (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 429.

⁶ Lackey, Michael, "Frantz Fanon on the Theology of Colonization" *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* Vol. 3, No. 2 (Fall 2002): 1-29; and Marie-Aimee Helie-Lucas, "Women, Nationalism and Religion in the Algerian Liberation Struggle" in *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 276.

⁷ See Richard Onwuanibe, *A Critique of Revolutionary Humanism* (St. Louis: Warren H Green Inc., 1983) and Marie Perimbaum, *Holy Violence* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1982). Also Ali Shari'ati translated some of Fanon's work into Persian and supposedly debated with Fanon about the use of Islamic unity as a weapon against colonialism. See Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998), 217.

demonstrating the salience of religion in Fanon's anti-colonialism. My primary concern is not to manufacture an idea of Fanon as a sacralised icon of struggle, nor do I wish to argue for the necessity of religion in Fanon's anti-colonialism. While all these concerns are related to my argument, they merely offer a preliminary context for understanding and reading religion in Fanon's works. I do believe that his engagement with religious traditions is significant to the development of his anti-colonialism since it is clear that he simultaneously rejected and retained them in his analysis.

What I intend to do is to demonstrate the prevalence and persistence of religion in the historical and social context within which Fanon's ideas developed. It is also my aim to interrogate the ways in which Fanon resolved and mediated the question of religion in his reflections on the black psyche and oppressed collectives. Finally, I intend to identify an archaeology of the sacred in the works of Frantz Fanon because, while Fanon dismissed world religion and "primitive" religion, he was nonetheless forced to recognize the significance of the sacred in cohering social collectivities and in the recovery of the black self. This particular focus on the transformative potential of the sacred allows a reading of Fanon as a site of knowledge production with regard to the relation between religion and modernity.

It is widely acknowledged that there is no essential Fanon, and as such it would be naïve to claim that there might exist an essentially Fanonian perspective on religion. I propose rather to explore and analyse his engagements with communities of belief in the Antilles, the secular modernism of metropolitan France where he went to university, and finally, his entanglement with the Islamic anti-colonial struggle in Algeria. Even though the delineations between these three sites run the risk of over-simplifying Fanon's relationship with these communities, it nonetheless offers a framework for understanding his views on religion in particular social contexts. It also helps us understand how each may

have contributed to his work on the transformation of the black self and the colonized peoples.

Key Questions:

1. What is the place of religion in Frantz Fanon's life and works? Why is there a necessity to consider the significance of religion in Fanon?
2. How do we account for the persistence of religion in Fanon? How does Fanon, as a self-confessed humanist, respond to religion?
3. How does Fanon's aesthetic of transformation invoke and activate the sacred without implicating the beliefs and practices of contemporary faith communities?
4. How are we to understand the significance of the sacred in Fanon's work? What conclusions can we draw from this for the significance of religion in the field of postcolonial studies?

FANON'S MODERNITY

By framing my reading of Fanon in terms of religion and modernity, I hope to illustrate the extent to which he was a product of his time. Without underestimating the exceptional character of Fanon, and the outstanding contribution he made through his writing and activism, we have to revisit the sense in which he was a product of French assimilationism. His education on the island of Martinique, reserved for the privileged *beke* and mulatto, was a direct result of French assimilationist policy.

His passion to serve the allies against European fascism was fuelled by his dedication to the republican ideals of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*, which revealed his relative youthful ease with the relationship between the colonized

and the colonizer. Finally, both his relocation to France for further education, which was an indication of his social mobility, and his posting to Blida were not uncharacteristic for the period. It was quite common under French colonial policy for educated Martinicans to be posted for administrative and professional service to other French colonies.⁸ What I am arguing is that there was nothing so outstanding in the path that Fanon's life and education took. But what did set him apart was his interpretation of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in his writing. However, this would only come after his move to Europe where he encountered widespread racism.

From the time of his departure from Martinique in 1939 to the publication of *Black Skin, White Masks* in 1952, there was no hint of the passionate and militant activist we encounter in his later books. Instead, the image that we get is that of a dedicated young Catholic mulatto who wanted to serve France and defend its liberal ideals. Early on in this text he recalls the carefree days of young men leisurely strolling about the plaza in Fort de France, displaying deportment, decorum and linguistic confirmation of their Frenchness – a social performance where the social and linguistic norms of French culture were re-enacted and reinforced.⁹ Of course his idealistic notion of citizenship and equality was then deeply altered by his encounter of racism in Europe. It was at this point that he began to reflect on the social conditions of the colonized and critically thought about the mechanisms of alienation, and the practices of exclusion that limited the responses of the colonized to their social conditions.

At the outset of *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon made it clear that, to him, the colonialist bourgeoisie was aided and abetted in the pacification of the colonized by the inescapable powers of religion. He wrote that, "All the saints who turned the other cheek, who forgave those who trespassed against them,

⁸ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life* (London: Granta, 2000), 109.

⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 24.

who, without flinching, were spat upon and insulted, are championed and shown as an example."¹⁰ Clearly Fanon regarded the church as an institution that essentially served to sanction the acts of the colonialists and to encourage compliance from the colonized. What is not so clear is whether this analysis emerged from a critique of the role of religion in Martinique, or as a result of the prevailing appetite for secularization that characterized European scholarly work at the time.

While Fanon was critical of the church's collusion with colonial racism, his discussion of the matter betrayed a somewhat taken-for-granted familiarity with the Catholic Church. This familiarity was evident from the number of anecdotes throughout *Black Skin White Masks* as well as *The Wretched of the Earth* which suggest more than just a passing knowledge of the church. Of course the racialised, anti-Christian rhetoric of the African and other anti-colonial nationalist movements had a significant influence in shaping the way in which the church was spoken of in the anti-colonial struggle - wherein it would be described as a white, European institution that sanctioned oppressive practices. That having been said, Fanon also harboured a deep dis-ease about "primitive" religions which he first encountered in Martinique and later in Africa. In *Black Skin, White Masks* he explicitly referred to indigenous religious practices as savagery, witchcraft and as cults.¹¹ Jean Paul Sartre announced in the preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* that "the day of magicians and fetishes will end."¹² Where he had previously confidently rejected the church as collaborating with colonialists, Fanon seemed to have feared the dark and unruly power of the "primitive", whilst he maintained a cautious respect for the Islam and Judaism he encountered in Algeria.

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, (New York: Grove, 1968), 52.

¹¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 126-129.

¹² Jean Paul Sartre, "Preface," *The Wretched of the Earth*, 26.

UNDERSTANDING RELIGION

Fanon's understanding of religion was not limited to faith traditions alone irrespective of whether they were understood as "world religions" or "primitive religions". Undoubtedly, Fanon's critical reading of the European self-conception as rational, civil and benevolent and the subsequent collapse of this self-conception in the wake of two World Wars was partly shaped by the theorizing of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. At the turn of the century these scholars sought to understand the moral and political crisis of European society and in particular to analyse these social changes in terms of the declining fortunes of religion and religious institutions, the expansion and organization of the labour market, and the increasing secularization of society. I hope to demonstrate in this thesis the extent to which Fanon drew on these prevailing theories of his day to advance his race-inflected critique of the relations between the colonizer and the colonized.

Marx, Durkheim and Weber significantly shaped the way in which Fanon and his contemporaries understood their world,¹³ and their early theories are particularly helpful as we consider Fanon's approaches to religion. Marx, Durkheim and Weber have all influenced what is today known, in the study of religion, as secularization theories. These took as their starting point, the diminishing significance of religious institutions, the triumph of individualism, and the emergence of a market-oriented model. These scholars, faced with increasing modernity in a context where they believed culture was moving to a place of mass non-belief, sought to ask what that meant for contemporary society which had many structures based around religion? Gauri Viswanathan remarked that "in the great secularization movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from which emerged the concept of the tolerant modern state, it is

¹³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 218-219. n.6 Unlike the many explicit references to Marx this is a footnote which shows that Fanon was familiar with Durkheim's work

possible to discern, if not the origins of the modern religious and ethnic strife, at least prototypical enactments of the drama of citizenship."¹⁴

Though Marx, the earliest of the three theorists, wrote little about religion, his most direct statements on religion occurred in the first paragraphs of his "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction" where he asserted that religion was "the opium of the people". He began this article by suggesting that "the criticism of religion has been largely completed; and the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism." This reflected his view that the state and society produce an illusion wherein reality is inverted and religion would become the real and compelling force in people's lives. For Marx "the criticism of religion disillusion man so that he will think, act and fashion his reality as a man [sic] who has lost his illusions and regained his reason; so that he will revolve about himself as his own true sun."¹⁵ As such he attacked any belief system that inverted the material world from being the primary reality, because he believed that religion was of no relevance to our understanding of social structures and problems.

Marx saw religion as more of an indication of the conditions of the oppressed, "religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, the soul of soulless circumstances, it is the opium of the people."¹⁶ Thus religion points to a condition that the person needed to escape from and the persistence of religion is a reflection of the alienation that individuals felt from their material existence.

Now, unlike Marx, who saw economic factors as the primary force that gives history direction, Durkheim spent a great deal of time considering the

¹⁴ Gauri Visawanathan, "Religious Conversion and the Politics of Dissent" in *Conversion to Modernities*, ed. Peter van der Veer (New York: Routledge, 1996), 89.

¹⁵ Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction", in *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher* (Paris: 7 & 10 February, 1844) Works of Karl Marx 1843 <http://www.marxist.org/archive/marx/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>

¹⁶ Karl Marx, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction", in *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher* (Paris: 7 & 10 February, 1844) Works of Karl Marx 1843

significance of religion and how it influenced the structure and direction of society. However, in his pursuit of a scientific approach to the study of religion, Durkheim, like Marx, worked with the view that religion was a reflection of society rather than an indication of an external supernatural reality. Durkheim defined religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them”.¹⁷ However, towards the end of *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* Durkheim revised and secularized his definition of religion as, “first and foremost, a system of ideas by which men [sic] imagine the society of which they are members and the obscure yet intimate relations they have with it”.¹⁸

The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, the last major work published by Durkheim, five years before his death in 1917, is generally regarded as his best and most mature book. It was this text that defined the scholarship an entire generation of thinkers, alongside Weber and Marx, and it is thus hard to imagine that Fanon would not have been influenced, directly or indirectly, by the historical core of the sociological tradition. Durkheim set out to do two things, establish the fact that religion was *not* divinely or supernaturally inspired and that it was in fact a product of society. He sought to identify the common things that religion placed an emphasis upon, as well as to ascertain what effects those religious beliefs had on the lives of all within a society.

He was not content to make religion the epistemological basis for contemporary society. He sought to radically invert this conception of the relation of religion and society, making not religion the origin of society, but in fact making society the origin of religion. In this way he followed Marx when he declared religion a reflection of society. However, while Marx saw God as an idealization of human

¹⁷ Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 1st edn. 1912 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976), 44.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 227.

nature, Durkheim viewed God as society itself. For example, he argued that “God is first of all a being that man conceives of as superior to himself in some respects and one on whom he believes he depends. ... Society also fosters in us the sense of perpetual dependence. ... Society requires us to make ourselves its servants, forgetful of our own interests”.¹⁹

Recognizing the social origin of religion, Durkheim argued that religion acted as a source of solidarity and identification for the individuals within a society, especially as a part of mechanical solidarity systems, and to a lesser, but still important extent, in the context of organic solidarity. Religion provided a meaning for life, it provided authority figures, and most importantly for Durkheim, it reinforced the morals and social norms held collectively by all within a society. Far from dismissing religion as mere fantasy, despite its natural origin, Durkheim saw it as a critical part of the social system. Religion provided social control, cohesion, and purpose for people, as well as another means of communication and gathering for individuals to interact and reaffirm social norms.

In this work I hope to demonstrate that Frantz Fanon understood the organization of society in deeply Durkheimian terms, but then proceeded to excavate religion and replace it with the idea of the “new man” and “national culture”. In the second chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon captured the consuming force of the racial alienation of the black man, who exclaimed “I think in French, France is my religion”.²⁰ Here Fanon alluded to the force of French assimilation. The severity of this assimilation demanded the radical inversion of French values which he proposed in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon offered a theory of transformation whereby the colonized subject no longer sought redemption through being French, but instead argued that redemption would come from the recognition of the self as wholly human – the ‘new man’.

¹⁹ Ibid., 208-209.

²⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 70.

Weber, the last of the three writers, like Durkheim, invested significant time in the study of religion. Also similar to Durkheim, Weber saw a great deal of contemporary society as rooted in the processes of religion. However, like Marx, Weber saw as the driving force of history, material interests and not ideas, as founded in religious beliefs. So, in tying religion to the spread of capitalism, as he did in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he attempted to show that the ideas behind the religious beliefs of Calvinists determined the direction of forces that were already in motion. The combination of technologies that facilitated capitalism, and the ascetic habits of the Calvinists, allowed capitalism to flourish in Europe and spread to the Americas. In the *Sociology of Religion*, Weber laid out his thesis that people generally pursued their own interests, and that religious leaders and structures helped people achieve those goals. In this way, religion provides the tools for both stability and social change.

Although he did not adopt explicitly Weberian terms, Fanon, in *Wretched of the Earth*, spoke of the Christian religious institutions as: "the church in the colonies... the white people's church, the foreigner's church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor. And as we know, in this matter many are called but few chosen."²¹ Throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon made references to the various ways in which the Catholic Church served the interests of the colonizer. One such story recalls the experience of a friend, who 'being a Catholic' joined a pilgrimage, only to be told by a priest that he had no business there. Fanon insisted that this was a universal experience for the black person.

In Chapter Two of *Black Skins, White Masks* Fanon critiqued Mayotte Capecia's autobiographical *I am a Martinican Woman* – in which she, as the protagonist Capecia, was appalled by the film *Green Pastures*' depiction of God and the angels as black. His critique of Capecia's idea of God and the angels suggested

²¹ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 32.

that he held some sympathy for the authority of the Catholic Church. We may assume that Fanon's primary objection is to Capecia's politics of race, but he seemed quite uncritical of the authority of the church in the popular imagination. Later in his life, particularly during his time in Africa, he seemed to find religion and cultural traditions in the public arena particularly objectionable. What appeared to be a more tolerant view of religion during his early years, gave way to a more dogmatic view on the role of religion in the public domain, especially in relation to the anti-colonial revolution. One may then assume that possibly religion, at the level of personal piety, was less of an issue for Fanon, but that he regarded institutional authority as dangerous. It would appear that he harboured a particular anxiety that personal piety should become unruly when organized into collectives that could undermine modernism or rationalism.

I argue that as Fanon sought to come to terms with the meaning of religion in the context of his work and activism, three key contemporary writers and social movements representing intellectual traditions influenced his engagements with religion. Firstly, his mentor Aime Cesaire's negritude embraced Africa as the sacred origin of global black suffering. Where Africa had previously been this elusive dreamscape for Fanon, negritude would put it at the heart of the black psyche. Secondly, there was the adamant humanism of Richard Wright, an African-American contemporary of Fanon, who rejected religion and saw it as archaic and undermining of black self-recognition. And thirdly, Albert Memmi, a Tunisian Jew, who saw Fanon as culturally Christian and out of step with the Arab-Islamic culture, argued that black self-discovery cannot fully be achieved by rejection of religion and cultural background but through resolving these issues internally.²²

In his essay "Pitfalls of National Consciousness", Fanon reflected some of his anxiety about organized religion in his discussion of the local religious movements

²² Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, trans. Nadia Benabid (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 193-194.

in Algeria, when he remarked that they will “show a new vitality and will once more take up their rounds of excommunications”.²³ He viewed the revival of indigenous institutions as likely to distract the people from the struggle for national identity. Frantz Fanon in “On National Culture” wrote that “colonialism has not ceased to maintain the Negro as savage”²⁴ as if to focus our attention on European complicity on continuing representations of the native, but then he himself closely followed this statement with references to local traditions as superstition, and fanaticism in frenzied ritual, denoting a conception of indigenous as primitive and non-rational.

In seeking to articulate his conception of cultural alienation in *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon wrote that the “Negro’s behaviour makes him akin to an obsessive neurotic type.”²⁵ In *Wretched of the Earth* he distanced himself from such essentialist notions by couching his argument in terms of European parentalism. He claimed that “the effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the native’s head the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality.”²⁶ He argued that European representations of black people were developed out of a conception of humanness that equates being human with being rational, and that “primitive religion” was intrinsically irrational. He appeared at once critical of European conceptions of the native as savage, and yet he was seduced by Europe’s rational modernism. I am not suggesting that these positions are necessarily mutually exclusive, simply that they produced, for Fanon, an ambivalence towards religion. Although he sought to argue that religion was redundant, he also sought to oppose the argument that presumed that the native, lacking religion, was more base and animal-like. On the one hand he had to address the European claim that the native’s supposed lack of religion was evidence of the

²³ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 87.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

²⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 60.

²⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 169.

absence of rationality, while on the other hand he sought to advance the notion that religion, whether Islamic, Catholic or indigenous, had no role to play in the social and political relations of the postcolony.

MODERNITY AND POSTCOLONIALISM

During the period that Fanon was writing it was quite fashionable to assume that “with the diffusion of modern life forms including urbanization, industrialization, rationalization and pluralization, the social relevance of religion and the church would decrease, and religious worldviews would gradually be replaced by scientific, rationalized and secular interpretations of the world.”²⁷ However, more recently, various scholars have sought to critique this particular thesis to demonstrate that the church’s increasing lack of social significance cannot be assumed to be an indication of the redundancy of religion. Terms such as the spiritualization of society, de-secularization, Riesebrodt’s the return of religions, Wilhelm Graf’s the return of the gods, Heelas and Woodhead’s spiritual revolution, or Jose Casanova’s deprivatization of religiousness have come to reflect a considerable reappraisal of the relationship between religion and modernity. Of these models, the secularization model, emerging out of the work of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, who respectively argued that religion has lost its central role due to the division of labour and conflict of value systems as characteristic of modern society, was by far the most influential.

Detlef Pollack argued that the proliferation of tradition and differentiation of social institutions should be seen to be producing greater religious pluralism, instead of what had been traditionally interpreted as a diminishing of religious affiliation. He suggested that “if modernity is defined by processes of cultural pluralization, institutional differentiation, and urbanization, religion does not suffer

²⁷ Detlef Pollack, “Introduction” in *The Role of Religion In Modern Societies*, eds. Detlef Pollack and Daniel V.A. Olson (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1.

defeat under the conditions of modernity, but rather profits from them."²⁸

Sociologists have tended to argue that the only claims that can reasonably be made about the salience and significance of religion must be based on religious affiliation and frequency of attendance – and all such indications are that religion is in decline.²⁹ Instead of pursuing traditional avenues for ascertaining the significance of religion such a religious affiliation, I propose instead to focus on the development of the sacred in Fanon's writing, and in the development of his theories of social transformation. I argue that, in bracketing off religion, Fanon sought to produce anti-colonial narratives of meaning-making, that made possible continuities between his revolutionary humanism and the beliefs of the colonized. Finally, I hope to unearth how he understood the meaning of religion in the life of the individual; within the struggle against colonialism; and its place in the postcolonial state.

In his introduction to *Conversion to Modernities*, Peter van der Veer contended that although in many modern nation-states discourses on the nation and discourse on religious communities are combined, that for many "modernity implies secularism; that is the privatization and the political marginalization of religious beliefs."³⁰ Elsewhere, he cautioned against such totalizing approaches to the study of religion in the postcolony and suggested that "we should take religious discourse and practice as constitutive of changing identities, rather than treating them as ideological smoke screens that hide the real clash of material interests and social classes."³¹

The fields of religion and postcolonial studies, when not fraught with controversy, have been marked by silence. In *Mapping the Sacred: Religion, Geography*

²⁸ Ibid., 5.

²⁹ David Voas, "The Continuing Secular Transition" in *The Role of Religion In Modern Societies*, eds. Detlef Pollack, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 27.

³⁰ Peter Van der Veer, "Introduction" *Conversion to Modernities*, ed. Peter Van der Veer (New York: Routledge, 1996) 12.

³¹ Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) xi.

and *Postcolonial Literature*, Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley argued that “the relationship between religion and postcolonial literature will be understood more productively when one considers the importance of shifting landscapes and territories of (post)colonial places”.³² In the field of postcolonial studies, religion is generally regarded as a secondary field of interest, regarded as useful for offering texture to more salient identitarian concerns. Laura Donaldson’s introductory work entitled, *Postcolonialism and Religious Studies* was the first text that explicitly sought to bring the fields of postcolonial studies and religion into conversation. The fact that this text appeared as late as 2003 reflected the reluctance of postcolonial studies to really engage the issue of religion. In his critical work on Edward Said, which explores the religious effect of culture, William Hart highlighted what is indicative of postcolonial studies approach to religion when he concluded:

To construe religion and secularism as opposites, as Said does, is to be blind to some of the most interesting ways of being religious and secular. ...religion and secularism is an economy, an ongoing process of exchange³³

The most useful of recent texts on the intersection of the two fields is Richard King’s *Orientalism and Religion*. In the closing chapter of this book, King offered several critical observations about the place of religion in postcolonial studies. In particular, he argued that in the postcolonial context, we should “attempt to think across and beyond traditional Orientalist representations... of religion”.³⁴ He acknowledged that one can abstract ‘the religious’ from the wider cultural context within which it operates but that such abstraction remains an essentially intellectual enterprise. Drawing on the observations of Talal Asad, King cautioned against reifying religion as if it could exist apart from its social and historical

³² Jamie S Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley, review of *Postcolonialism and Religious Studies*, by Laura E. Donaldson *Literature and Theology* 2003 17(2): 219-221

³³ William Hart, *Edward Said and the Religious Effect of Culture* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 165.

³⁴ Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1999), 210.

context. This study nonetheless regards religion as a theoretical construct useful for the purposes of examining particular aspects of the human experience. In her *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, Pui-Ian Kwok lamented the fact that, even after Donaldson's text, the significance of religion in the postcolony remained grossly neglected.³⁵

This study is a deliberate attempt to contribute to the body of knowledge that will emerge from the exchange between religion and postcolonialism. In particular, this thesis is concerned with understanding how Frantz Fanon engaged with and sought to resolve the question of religion, and the implication thereof for contemporary postcolonial studies.

As I have suggested, Fanon appeared to have subscribed to a modernist reading of religion, as institutions of spontaneous and irrational support of certain political paradigms. However, I am not suggesting that Fanon was not critical of colonial modernity because in his critique of colonialism he offered decisive observations about its flawed nature. Similarly, while I recognize his decisive critique of colonial modernity, through a reading of his engagements with religion, I suggest that Fanon was himself trapped in a primitive-modern dichotomy. He undoubtedly pursued a line of argument that collapsed the Marxian, Durkheimian and Weberian arguments of modernist rationality's triumphing over mass religious adherence and undermining the widespread authority of religious institutions. Consequently, Fanon saw no significance for religion in the anti-colonial struggle, except perhaps through functionalist use of certain symbols and rituals to deceive the colonist, for example when Muslim women would use the *burka* to hide and smuggle weapons. Since religion had no intrinsic value to the process of black self-recognition, Fanon could not imagine any place for religion in the postcolony. It is thus reasonable to ask what Fanon would have to say about the persistence of religion in the postcolony.

³⁵ Pui-Ian Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 7.

Should we regard it as a corruption of his vision of the 'new man' or are we facing the limits of Fanon's imagination.

Fanon rejected "primitive religion" and indigenous cultural practices, which he viewed as stemming from religious worldviews. However, it is also clear that he grappled with the idea of religion, often exhibiting a deep ambivalence about the question of religious institutions. Benjamin Stora, in writing about the French settlers of colonial Algeria, argued that well before, and during the Algerian war, when the Catholic Church came, "face to face with Islam, [it] gained significance as a means of preserving Algerian French identity."³⁶ Evidently the Church had previously struggled to become a meaningful part of Algerian society until the colonialist push to undermine and replace Islam as the religion of the people. Thus we see that, although Fanon considered Islam and Catholicism to be the "great revealed" or world religions, he would as easily condemn the Catholic Church for collaboration with French colonists or unashamedly assert that it took an Algerian Jew to help him overcome his distrust of Muslims.

In his essay, "The Pitfalls of National Culture" Fanon wrote that the national front had "forced colonialism to withdraw, crack up, and waste the victory it has gained"³⁷ in the struggle for independence. He argued this because he believed that the struggle for control over the formerly colonial administrative structures would ultimately give rise to religious rivalries. For Fanon the rivalries occurred among the administrative classes in the urban centres. Thus Fanon employed an uncharacteristically explicit and narrow conception of religion that included Islam and Catholicism, but excluded the indigenous religions and maraboutic cults associated with familial settlements among the rural poor. So while he coupled Islam and Catholicism as two great or world religions, he argued that

³⁶ Benjamin Stora, 'The "Southern" World of the *Pieds Noirs*: Reference to and Representations of Europeans in Colonial Algeria' in *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen (New York, Routledge, 2005), 232.

³⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 128.

“inside a single nation, religion splits up the people into different spiritual communities.”³⁸

Totally unexpected events break out here and there. In regions where Catholicism or Protestantism predominates, we see the Moslem minorities flinging themselves with unaccustomed ardour into their devotions. The Islamic feast days are revived, and the Moslem religion defends itself inch by inch against the violent absolutism of the Catholic faith.³⁹

Although his concern then moved primarily to expose the excesses of the ruling, administrative classes, Fanon suggested that in their pursuit of power to lead the nation, each of these two great religions established a racial philosophy that was harmful to the future of the African continent. In their competition to gain control over the levers of power they reinforced colonial representations of each other. Thus, black Africa is referred to as savage – inert, brutal and uncivilized - and Muslims are despised for the use of the veil, polygamy and the Arab propensity for violence, and a supposed disdain for women.

Further, it would appear that for Fanon, the vital force of autochthonous or local traditions made the nation vulnerable to ethnic division. He suggested that the bourgeois interest of the nationalist movement would be replaced by tribal interest as the principle around which support would become mobilized. He insisted that this “tribalizing of the central authority encourages regionalist ideas and separatism” which inevitably resulted in “intellectual and spiritual poverty.”⁴⁰ We can thus conclude that Fanon, at least in “Pitfalls of National Consciousness”, worked with a conception of religion as the domain of belief and practice of those who self-designate as Catholic and Muslim, but his definition could extend to include local religions, some of which may be Arab/ Islamic in character. He appeared to have largely regarded ethnic or tribal traditions as a form of

³⁸ Ibid., 129.

³⁹ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 147-148.

religious and political organization that possesses a vitality that cannot be easily dismissed. Thus Fanon not only harboured a fear that religion would domesticate the revolutionaries, but he also revealed a deep anxiety about the destructive potential of religion.

THE AMBIVALENCE OF THE SACRED

The study of Fanon has recently seen a significant amount of attention dedicated to the 'question of culture'. In his biography of Frantz Fanon, David Macey explored at length the ambivalent relationship between Fanon's universalist struggle against oppression and the force of local Algerian Arabic interests concerned with revitalising national culture.⁴¹ Although influenced by the appeal of Aimé Césaire's and Léopold Senghor's brands of negritude, Fanon was deeply suspicious of, and ultimately, opposed calls for the recovery of indigenous culture and traditions. He regarded such acts of recovery and celebration of a glorious African past, as no less stifling than the colonial approaches to local traditions.⁴²

He wrote that even in "recalling the sacred unity of the struggle for liberation... the people fall back into the past and become drunk on the remembrance."⁴³ For Fanon, cultural recovery cannot be divorced from the struggle for liberation, because the activist throws "himself body and soul into the national struggle." Fanon insisted "there is no other fight for culture which can develop apart from the popular struggle."⁴⁴ He argued that "the native intellectual who takes up arms to defend his nation's legitimacy and who wants to bring proof to bear out that legitimacy, who is willing to strip himself naked to study the history of his

⁴¹ David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Life*, 484.

⁴² Halford H Fairchild, "Fanon's Wretched of the Earth in Contemporary Perspective." *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 25: 2 (1994): 191-199.

⁴³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 135-136.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 187.

body, is obliged to dissect the heart of his people."⁴⁵ In his *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa*, Christopher Miller argued that "Fanon's weakness is seen to consist not in an underestimation of the persistence of the 'traditional' political practices and forms of thought in the colonial era, but in contempt for tradition."⁴⁶ Similarly, in his critique of Fanon's humanism, Richard Onwuanibe suggested that in the development of his "revolutionary humanism" and the emergence of the 'new man' Fanon was positively dismissive of indigenous religion and traditions.⁴⁷

Despite his contempt for tradition and dismissal of religion, Fanon nonetheless acknowledged the place of the sacred in the life of the oppressed. He understood the sacred in spatial and temporal terms, and he saw it as active in dance, ritual performance, language and dress. While on the one hand he wrote extensively about "the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people,"⁴⁸ he also argued that the capital should play a small role in the life of the nation, which is sacred and fundamental."⁴⁹ The fact that he wrote of how in the banal search for exoticism, "the sari becomes sacred" revealed his generally ironic and ambivalent view of the sacred that mirrors the ambivalence inherent in the colonial situation.⁵⁰

In an attempt to demonstrate Fanon's ambivalence towards religion, religious institutions and practices, I will turn to Peter Byrne's definition of religion in relation to the sacred. Byrne described the sacred as "a class of objects of belief, ritual and experience. The sacred is regarded as other than the ordinary and mundane... the sacred may in a manner be private and unique but they are

⁴⁵ Ibid., 170.

⁴⁶ Christopher Miller, *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), 64.

⁴⁷ Richard Onwuanibe, *A Critique of Revolutionary Humanism: Frantz Fanon* (St Louis: Warren H Green Inc., 1983), 116.

⁴⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 133.

⁴⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 151.

⁵⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 178.

bound up with dimensions of belief, behaviour, experience and social organisation that define a human cultural phenomenon.”⁵¹ This understanding of the sacred, developed initially by Rudolph Otto in his *Idea of the Holy*, assumes that it is the ineffable character of the sacred that makes for religion. More recently, Mircea Eliade argued that “sacred” be treated as a *sui generis* ontological category because he believed that “whatever the historical context in which (man) is placed... there is an absolute reality, the sacred, which transcends this world but manifests itself in this world, thereby sanctifying it and making it real.”⁵²

Departing from this ahistorical notion of the sacred, Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss suggested that the sacred be treated as a symbolic representation of collectivity, through which a social or political group may produce cognitive boundaries that set them apart from others. Fanon understood that such symbolic representations of collectivity held the potential to both cohere and disrupt, to inaugurate and expel. Accordingly we can detect in his writing, both temporal continuity and disjuncture of the sacred. Fanon argued that while patriarchy and feudalism were legitimated through a sacred privileging of colonial patriarchy, colonialism served to disrupt and mutilate the sacred traditions that used to make possible what Sartre called “a certain communion of the faithful with sacred things.”⁵³ Georges Bataille noted “that nature of the sacred, in which we recognize the burning existence of religion, is perhaps the most ungraspable thing that has been produced between men.”⁵⁴ His conception of religion and of national liberation as socially constructed, especially when rooted in parochial tradition, caused Fanon a great degree of

⁵¹ Peter Byrne, “Religion and Religions” in *The Study of Religion, Traditional and New Religion*, eds. Stewart Sutherland and Peter Clarke (London: Routledge, 1991), 24.

⁵² Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. William R Trask (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), 202.

⁵³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 16.

⁵⁴ George Bataille, “Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939” in *Theory and History of Literature, Volume 14*, ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 242.

anxiety. He sought to make sense of the paradoxical relation of “the people” to religion, recognising that the relation was at once rooted in, and marked by, acts of negation and resistance. The ambivalence of this relationship, characterised by acts of resistance and negation, meant that Fanon recognized that religion can be an opiate but also that it offered people, spiritual and intellectual resources that gave meaning to their individual and collective struggles for self-determination.

I do not intend to reinvent Fanon, but rather to focus on his work in relation to narratives of transformation which rely on the idea of the sacred. For our purposes, the sacred can be understood as moments of privileging that which is ordinarily stifled, and the ways in which the ordinary is elevated to become a powerful and compelling icon of change. I am interested in the way Fanon articulates his conception of the religious or the sacred as at once parochial and national, at once personal and collective. In his reflection of the sacred Veikko Anttonen suggests that “setting specific times and places apart as sacred is a fundamental structure of human cultures, without which no religion, nation-state or political ideology can insure the continuity of its power, hierarchy and authority.”⁵⁵ It is precisely this quality of the sacred that emerge in the writing of Fanon. While he bracketed out religion from the idea of the new man and the new national culture, Fanon engaged in the setting apart of “times and places” to produce narratives of the sacred that at once cohered and motivated the colonized.

Frantz Fanon’s essay, “On National Culture”, is an attempt to bring into meaningful conversation the idea of nation and the tradition with the persistence of the sacred.⁵⁶ What sets this essay apart is the inscription of the problematics of culture as they related to the question of nation and national

⁵⁵ Veikko Anttonen, “Sacred” in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, eds. Willi Braun and Russel T. McCutcheon (New York: Cassel, 2000), 272.

⁵⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 168-199.

identity. Eric San Juan argued that “On National Culture” represented an attempt by Fanon to propose ways to “reconfigure the value and function of tradition and all the properties of indigenous life forms in a Manichean environment.”⁵⁷

While I have sought to identify some of the tensions in Fanon’s reading of religion or religious institutions, I argue that religion is not best understood by asking questions about orthodox doctrinal beliefs and summing up the answers, but by pursuing an expanded definition of what counts as “religious.” As much as traditional religious institutions and their doctrines may have been an important factor in the lives of individuals and communities, during the period of Fanon’s activism and writing, contemporary scholarship suggests that people’s understanding of religion encompasses a much broader range of practices, experiences, beliefs, and affiliations.⁵⁸

What I am most concerned with is not so much the elaborate myths that are the founding stories of a religious tradition, or the grand arcs of history that might function as “meta-narratives” in Fanon’s recovery of the ‘black self’ or the colonized people, but with understanding how modernity shaped Fanon’s conception of religion. In the past century, the nature of religion, and its place in society, has indeed changed, but not always in the direction that scholars like Fanon would have expected. A variety of new developments in the social sciences make this an opportune moment to re-think the relationship between religion and modernity. For example, while the idea of the nation state remains powerful, postcolonial identities and political aspirations are shaped through collectivities organized around other social inventories such as religion, ethnicity and geographic location. Not only has religion proven empirically resilient, but

⁵⁷ Eric San Juan, “An intervention into Cultural Studies” in *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Anthony Alessandrini (London: Routledge, 1991), 132.

⁵⁸ Meredith B. McGuire, “Towards a Sociology of Spirituality: Individual in Social/ Historical Context” in *The Centrality of Religion*, ed. Eileen Barker (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 216-218.

there have been a variety of changes in how we think about society itself. Fanon's work serves as a critical lens through which we may read the changing fortunes of religion, as well as a site for the study of how an intellectual, cultural and political icon such as Frantz Fanon responded to those changing conditions.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

In *Chapter One* I introduce Fanon in a historical context, by focusing on his social and political development while situating this development in a body of biographical and critical scholarship that has been produced since his death. This chapter introduces Fanon as exceptional, while at the same time reading him in the context of his life and work. Further, I explore the body of scholarship that has emerged around his life and writing, which has come to be known as Fanonism. Through this overview I demonstrate the intellectual richness of Fanonism, contestations about the man and his work, as well as its prominence in postcolonial studies.

Chapter Two marks the theoretical horizons of the study, and Fanon's intellectual boundaries. This chapter will explore, in detail, the intellectual movements that shaped Fanon's thinking and his writing, namely negritude, humanism and psychotherapy. Focusing on the role and significance of religion or the sacred, I propose to pursue a reading of these movements by interrogating Fanon's engagement with contemporaries such as Aime Cesaire, Richard Wright and Albert Memmi. Each are regarded as key theorists in the movements under consideration, and each mark the theoretical horizons of Fanon's thinking.

Chapter Three focuses on Martinique as a site of Fanon's social and intellectual development. Martinique represents a critical intersection of culture, economy and religion. The Caribbean produced a particular brand of exchanges between those who are no longer African but not yet European. Thus on the island of Martinique Fanon experiences the paradoxes of French colonialism – on

the island Frenchness is made possible through the recognition and expulsion of the creole other. While Fanon was brought up to reject the notion of Africa as his ancestral home, he soon learned that the French did not regard him as one of them. This produced in him a deeply ambivalent relationship with the diaspora religion of the creole culture and its affinity with Africa. Although it marked his expulsion from, or disjuncture with European recognition, his ambivalence about this affinity would later in his life serve as the foundation of his aesthetic of transformation.

Chapter Four offers a close reading of Fanon's four primary texts to ascertain the prevalence and significance of religion. I demonstrate that while Fanon acknowledged Catholicism and Islam as the great revealed religions or world religions, he also had a great deal of anxiety about indigenous or "primitive" religions, such as the maraboutism in Algeria or the spirit traditions of the Caribbean. While he regarded all religion as detracting from the struggle for freedom, Fanon was particularly concerned that the nativist recovery of "primitive religion" threatened to reinforce European representation of blacks as less than fully human. Influenced by the scholarship of Marx and Durkheim, Fanon produced a narrative of the sacred that acknowledged its significance in the life of the oppressed but was also at pains to assert that religion should be bracketed off from the anti-colonial struggle.

Chapter Five outlines and analyses Fanon's aesthetic of transformation which appears to rest on the idea of the sacred. By bracketing off religion, Fanon focused on the idea of the "new man" and the "new nation". Both the "new man" and the "new nation" assume a sacred meaning because they represent the sites where all the anxieties and contradictions about the black self, the black collective and religion become resolved. Fanon provided a new framework for interpreting social relations in the colonial zone but he also identified and unlocked intellectual and spiritual resources through a revision of

negritude, thrusting the over-determined body into violent combat, and finally through privileging the peasant class as prophetic.

In conclusion, in attempting to understand the prevalence and significance of religion in the life and work of Frantz Fanon, I find that Fanon resolves the question of religion in the postcolony by coupling the idea of the sacred with the inauguration of the "new man" and the "new nation". My primary finding is that through an emphasis on the idea of the "new man" and the "new nation", Fanon is able to produce an aesthetic of transformation that rests on an archaeology of the sacred that brackets off religious traditions and practices.

University of Cape Town

CHRONOLOGY

- 1635 Caribs on Martinique ousted by invading Europeans. Martinique claimed for France by Pierre Belain d'Esnambuc.
- 1802 After being part of the French Empire of the *ancien régime*, Martinique was lost to the British for several years, Martinique reverted to French rule and remains a French possession to the present day.
- 1830 France invades Algeria.
- 1848 France abolishes slavery throughout the empire. Algeria becomes officially integrated into France.
- 1925 Frantz Fanon is born on 20 July in Fort-de-France, Martinique.
- 1936 Leopold Senghor first uses the term 'negritude'.
- 1938 Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* is published.
- 1943 Fanon joins the Free French Forces after fleeing Martinique for Dominica before undergoing officer's training at Bougie, near Constantine.
- 1946 Following World War II, when Martinique was under Vichy control, the island's status changes from colony to overseas department of France (department d'outre-mer). Jean-Paul Sartre publishes his *Reflexions sur la question juive*.
- 1947 Fanon studies medicine and goes on to specialize in psychiatry in Lyon.
- 1947 René Maran published, *Un homme pareil aux autres*.
- 1948 Leopold Senghor edits and publishes *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (with an introduction by Jean-Paul Sartre entitled *Orphée Noir*); Mayotte Capécia published, *Je suis martiniquaise*.
- 1950 Aimé Césaire published *Discours sur le colonialisme*; Octave Mannoni published *Psychologie de la Colonisation*.
- 1952 Fanon publishes *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Black Skin, White Masks)
- 1953 Fanon is appointed head of Psychiatry at Blida-Joinville hospital in Algeria.

- 1954 The beginning of the Algerian war of independence. Fanon begins to collaborate with, and support, the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN). Fanon resigns his post as head of psychiatry a year later and begins to write for the FLN newspaper, *El Moudjahid*.
- 1955 Joseph Zobel published *La Rue des cases-negres* (Black Shack Alley)
- 1957 Albert Memmi published *Portrait du Colonise*.
- 1959 Fanon publishes *L'An V de la revolution Algerienne* (English translation, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, 1965).
- 1961 Fanon writes and publishes *Les Demmes de la terre* during the last few months of his life (English translation, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1965)
- 1961 Fanon dies from leukemia in Maryland, US.
- 1964 The posthumous publication of collected essays by Fanon entitled *Pour la Revolution Africaine* (English translation, *Towards the African Revolution*, 1967).
- 1960's Fanon's ideas become influential in the Black Panther movement in the United States, the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, and third world struggles against the West.
- 1967 *Peau noire, masques blancs* is translated into English, *Black Skins, White Masks* by Charles lam Markmann.
- 1981 Edouard Glissant publishes *le Discours antillais*.
- 1983 Euhzan Palcy's film adaption of Zobel's 1955 novel, *La Rue des cases-negres* (Sugar Cane Alley) about 1930's Martinique. Film won several awards including a Cesar (French equivalent of the Academy awards) and a Mostra at the Venice Film Festival.
- 1986 Major Fanon conference convened in Brazzaville, DRC (formerly, Congo). Reprint of English translation of *Black Skin, Whites Masks*, an introduction by Homi K. Bhabha.
- 1993 *Eloge de la creolite*, is published by J. Bernabe, P. Chamoiseau and R. Confiant; Patrick Chamoiseau's autobiographical *Childhood* is published, (translated to English in 1999 by Carol Volk).
- 1995 Isaac Julien's film *Black Skin, White Masks* is screened by the BBC.

CHAPTER ONE

FANON AND FANONISM

Since his untimely death in 1961, aged 36, the Martinican-born psychiatrist, writer and revolutionary, Frantz Fanon, has become a social and intellectual icon in radical Black politics. From Stokely Carmichael's *Black Power* militancy to Homi Bhabha's postcolonial poetics, Fanon's name has been constantly invoked in charged debates, or to animate wider political and intellectual concerns. In fact, Homi Bhabha, in his recent foreword to *The Wretched of the Earth*, reviewed the wide-ranging and mythical influence of Fanon's work over revolutionary and political traditions.¹ After a flurry of publications during the years immediately following his death, interest in Fanon faded. It would only gain momentum again when his writing became central to the development of cultural and postcolonial studies in the Anglophone academy.

According to the Reference and Research Services' Social Theory: Bibliographic Series on Fanon, there are more than 30 dedicated books (excluding articles and monographs) on Fanon's life and writing.² Numerous critical works and biographies on Fanon have been published since the advent of postcolonial studies as a field. These include Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man* (1995); Gordon, White and Sharpley-Whiting (eds.), *Fanon: A Critical Reader* (1996); Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectical Experience* (1996); Sharpley-Whiting, *Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminism* (1998); Alessandrini (ed.), *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives* (1999); Gibson (ed.), *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue* (1999); Cherki, *Frantz Fanon, Portrait* (2000); Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Life* (2000); Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* (2003); Silverman (ed.), *Frantz*

¹ Homi Bhabha, "Foreword: Remembering Fanon (Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition)," Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), vii.

² Joan Nordquist (compiler), "Frantz Fanon: A Bibliography", *Social Theory: A Bibliographic Series*, no.65 (2002): 31.

Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks (2005).

Frantz Fanon, the man, emerged at a time of self-critique in the history of Europe. It was also a time when colonies and former colonies were coming to independence. In the immediate aftermath of World War II, Europeans and people in the former colonies alike, faced a great many questions about the idea of the nation state, modernity and the role of the native intellectual. New intellectual movements emerged to interrogate the ideological assumptions that precipitated the moral imploding of the nation state in Europe and the emergence of nationalism in former colonies. For the metropole, the period was also marked by strained relations with the colonies and former colonies. These problems and tensions remained unresolved as resources and political attention shifted towards the anti-facist campaigns closer to home.

In its war effort many European countries drew on their colonies for various kinds of support to fight fascism. The recruitment and use of black soldiers from colonies marked a decisive shift in the mobility of people from the colonies as they moved to Europe. Though not uncommon before the war years, we see a marked increase in the number of people from the colonies coming to France. Citizens from the former colonies regarded themselves in a new, politically secure relation to, for example, metropolitan France. France in particular prided itself on its relationship with its colonies – a relationship fashioned on the ideals of the French Revolution. As such, most migrants from the colonies and former colonies regarded themselves as *evolue* and not as alien. This meant that they regarded themselves as entitled to the same education, resources and civic rights as any other French citizen. Thus Frantz Fanon came to prominence during a period of increasing global mobility for people from the colonized periphery towards imperial centres. This shift occurred also at a time when Europe's modernizing project(s) were under increasing scrutiny and the foundations of European self-conception were being reconsidered.

It is therefore not surprising that nearly all of Frantz Fanon's work was a reflection on or a critique of the conditions that characterised the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser. He also analysed the "double consciousness" of the black subject and proposed a collective therapeutic response to the alienation of the self-divided character of the colonized. And with it, he sought to propose a general response to the condition of colonialization. These ideas were framed and articulated in four primary texts that have been interpreted and analysed by several generations of literary, political, and philosophical scholars as well as activists. They are *Black Skin, White Masks*, *Wretched of the Earth*, *A Dying Colonialism* and *Towards the African Revolution*.

CHILDHOOD AND DEVELOPMENT

Frantz Fanon was born into a middleclass mulatto family on the French colonial island of Martinique on 20th July 1925. Fanon's parents were fourth generation descendants of former slaves of African origin. They were raised as the children of small farmers. But typical of their generation, his parents left the land and sought better prospects in the civil service and small retail businesses. With his father employed as a custom inspector, and his mother caring for eight children, while running a small shop, his family was regarded as quite conventional. Conventional in the context of colonial Martinique meant that the Fanons wore "contemporary European clothing, bought European furniture, practiced orthodox Catholicism, and entertained in styles consistent with European decorum."³

Not much is known about Fanon's early life, but the most striking narrative about 1930s Martinique was that depicted in Joseph Zobel's *La Rue des cases-negres* (Black Shack Alley). Often described as a classic of Francophone literature, this novel portrayed the brutal realities of rural Martinique and depicted a French

³ Katherine E. Browne, *Creole Economics: Caribbean Cunning under the French Flag* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 33.

education as being the only way of escaping those conditions. But Zobel also illustrated how education was also a cause of alienation as “boys will be able to enter a higher social class, but they will be forced to deny their origins.”⁴ I will provide a more detailed treatment of the film adaptation of Zobel’s novel in the chapter on Martinique, but the point I wish to make here is that the novel made it clear that young Martinicans and their parents, had only one significant choice: between the desperate conditions and life of struggle associated with the sugar cane plantations, or an alienating French education at the local Lycee. The plantation communities were still defined by pre-modern social relations and the supposed “primitive mentality” of slavery and ultimately savage Africa, and the Lycee was seen to be concerned with modernizing social and economic conditions through French rationalism and industry.

Most scholars agree that Frantz Fanon grew up in a middle-class family, but this needed to be understood in the context of the social and class stratification of Martinique. His family belonged to “an emerging black bourgeoisie of small land owners and civil servants... the underdeveloped and exploited economy of this Caribbean island permitted little luxury except for the *bekes*, the ruling white aristocracy, who controlled business and politics of this overseas department of France.”⁵ Bulhan remarked that Fanon’s family was among the 5% of black Martinicans who could afford to pay tuition fees for their kids to attend the local Lycee where they acquired French values and social values. As such, Frantz Fanon, the fifth of eight children, and the youngest boy, grew up speaking French and thought of himself as French.

Fanon understood at quite a young age that not only was the local creole dialect discouraged, but those who spoke French actively sought to lose their

⁴ David Macey, *Fanon, A Life* (London: Granta, 2000), 48.

⁵ Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), 16.

provincial accent.⁶ Thus his identity was shaped, not simply by the promotion of French values, but also significantly by the exclusion of creole language and culture. Discouraged from exploring creole culture, except for the occasional relapse when speaking with servants or his Guyanese friends, Fanon grew up suspicious of the creole tradition which embraced distinct folktales, food types, performance styles, music styles, and religious traditions.⁷ As a further indication of the Fanons increased assimilation, most biographers acknowledged the family's Catholicism.⁸

Fanon's early education followed strictly along the lines laid down by French assimilationist policy. The only books available were the official school textbooks concentrating on the glories of the metropolitan power and the French Empire. As for other French colonies, the official policy was assimilation, by which the blacks or the chosen few were promoted to the status of French citizens, enjoying in theory all the privileges of the white man's existence.⁹

As such Fanon grew up in a context that exalted all things white and French and derided anything creole or African. Katherine Browne wrote that in the Martinican imagination "French society represented the most advanced civilization... [in terms of] its Greek and Roman heritage, its Christian religion, its role in advancing the Enlightenment, its modern science, its capitalists economy".¹⁰ Some biographers, notably Gendzier, have sought to argue that Fanon's focus on race was largely shaped by his status as the darkest child in the family, coupled with his mother's differential treatment of Fanon's siblings according to gender and skin colour.¹¹ I find myself more sympathetic with the larger body of work which suggests that Fanon was responding to the conditions

⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 24.

⁷ Katherine E. Browne, *Creole Economics*, 85.

⁸ Hussein Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*, 21.

⁹ Emmanuel Hansen, "Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary," *Rethinking Fanon*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 54.

¹⁰ Katherine E. Browne, *Creole Economics*, 34-35.

¹¹ Irene Gendzier, *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study* (New York: Pantheon Books-Random House, 1973), 10.

of the Island and the global predicament of black people at the time.¹²

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon related many incidents that illustrated the widespread practices and perspectives that sought to set the Antillean apart from their African heritage. Francois Verges highlighted two incidents in the young Fanon's life when he appeared at once terrified yet curious about the 'black other'. These incidents involved his encounters with the Senegalese soldiers stationed on the island, and a visit by a dark skinned Guadeloupean lycee examiner.¹³ From both incidents we get a sense of a curious and carefree Fanon as he "scoured the streets eagerly for a sight of their uniforms"¹⁴ and also "driven by curiosity, went to the hotel where they were staying, simply in order to see Mr. B., a philosophy teacher who was supposed to be remarkably black".¹⁵ Fanon's concern, at this time, was to evidence, not just the fact that the Guadeloupean teacher or the Senegalese soldier was darker, and thus less European in their conduct, but also that their customs and practices could be regarded as "primitive" or "savage" religion. Evidently, Martinicans also sought to exclude and suppress the supposed "primitive religion" that resided in creole practices right in their Antillean backyard. Fanon wrote that:

as a schoolboy, I had on many occasion to spend whole hours talking about the supposed customs of the savage Senegalese. In what was said there was a lack of awareness that was at the very least paradoxical. Because the Antillean did not think of himself as a black man; he thinks of himself as an Antillean. Subjectively, intellectually, the Antillean conducts himself like a white man.¹⁶

I distrust what is black in me, that is, the whole of my being.
...when I am at home my mother sings me French love songs in which there is never a word about negroes. When I disobey, when I

¹² Geismar (1971), Bulhan (1985) and Macey (2000)

¹³ Francois Verges, "Creole Skin, Black Mask: Fanon and Disavowal," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (Spring, 1997): 578-595

¹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 163. n.25

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 164. n.25

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 148.

make too much noise, I am told to “stop acting like a nigger.”¹⁷

What these stories illustrated was that while Fanon and his peers enjoyed a carefree life of running about the narrow and dusty streets of Fort de France where they could indulge their curiosity, he was not immune to the social values and prejudices of the island. The Martinique of Fanon's childhood was French and Catholic where strict racial hierarchies were policed and reinforced through the most mundane social interactions. David Macey argued, in disagreement with Gordon (1995) and Onwuanibe (1983), that Catholicism did not necessarily have a decisive influence on the young Frantz. He insisted that although Church-going was a serious matter in the Fanon household, the young Frantz Fanon never received religious education at school because the Lycee Schoelcher was “militantly secular”.¹⁸ That having been said, Hussein Bulhan observed that “at home and in school, through songs and folklore, by means of praise or punishment, and in all aspects of social existence, capitulation to the French culture and identification with whites was invariably inculcated.”¹⁹ As a child Fanon understood the necessity of mastering the French language and outlook on life since every Martinican would be judged by how he spoke and conducted himself.²⁰

Fanon's identity was not only shaped through the advancing of French culture and values, but also through vilifying that which was regarded as primitive or creole.²¹ Most scholars today agree that these creole traditions are not best described as “hybrid”, which implies the synthesis of two or more cultures to produce something new, but rather creole refers to new forms of knowledge and practice that are the result of both resistance and accommodation to colonial conditions in the Caribbean. Because there were no straightforward

¹⁷ Ibid., 191.

¹⁸ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 64.

¹⁹ Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*, 24.

²⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 147 and 167.

²¹ Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, trans. Nadia Benabid (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 217-218.

solutions to colonial conditions of brutality, the colonized employed practices of resistance and accommodation to forge new identities that would later be understood as “creole”.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, we noted the extent to which Fanon had internalized the exclusion of what was regarded as creole – such as the practice of Caribbean religious traditions such as vodou, Santeria, Candomble, quimbois as well as other spiritist traditions that were seen as imported by, or retained from African slaves.²² Thus these diasporic religious traditions not only threatened the privileged status of the Catholic Church but they also reinforced the foundations upon which contemporary Antillean identities rested.²³ Frantz Fanon recalled that when he came “face to face with these rites, I am doubly alert” and he wrote about the ritual practices as “Black magic! Orgies, witches’ Sabbath, heathen ceremonies”.²⁴ He concluded that this was humanity at its lowest and thus wished to distance himself from the practices of “primitive religion” that threatened his Frenchness.

Elsewhere he described how as a child he was reprimanded for speaking the creole that he grew up with. The expression the mother used to discipline and humiliate her son, *tibande*, was a reference to gangs of children who worked in the sugar cane fields. Thus to speak creole was to be seen to be acting like a savage. David Macey argued that “it evokes all the shame associated with having to work in the hell of the cane fields. The shame is then projected on to Créole itself.”²⁵

During his teenage years Fanon had two decisive experiences that ignited his

²² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 123-124.

²³ Laennec Hurbon, “New Religious Movements in the Caribbean” in *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*, ed. James A. Beckford (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1991), 150.

²⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 126.

²⁵ David Macey, “Frantz Fanon, or the Difficulty of Being Martinican,” *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 58:1 (Autumn 2004): 211-223.

political consciousness. The first was the material consequences that resulted from the fall of France to the Vichy Administration, which effectively instituted a military dictatorship on the island. The second came in the form of the mentorship and tutelage of Aimé Césaire insofar as he introduced to his students a resistance to racism and colonial inequality. It goes without saying that the author of *Discourse on Colonialism* and *Notebook of a Return to Native Land*, and a leading anti-colonial activist who later became mayor of Fort-de-France and *député* to the French National Assembly for Martinique on the Communist party ticket, had a lasting influence on the young Fanon. At that time Césaire taught at the school Fanon attended, *Lycee Schoelcher*, which happened to be the most prestigious high school in Martinique. The relationship between the two men will be further developed in the next chapter, where I will address a number of intellectual and political influences on Fanon.

Throughout his first book, *Black Skin, White Masks* there is ample evidence of the impression Césaire made on Fanon. In his essay entitled 'West Indians and Africans' Fanon recalled some of the lasting impressions made by Césaire. He wrote: "For the first time a *lycee* teacher – a man, therefore, who was apparently worthy of respect – was seen to announce quite simply to the West Indian society "that it is fine and good to be a Negro." To be sure this created a scandal... two centuries of white truth proved this man to be wrong. He must be mad, for it was unthinkable that he could be right."²⁶ Finally, we can conclude that Fanon held Césaire and the ideals he represented in such high esteem that after he completed his studies in France, he returned to Martinique in 1945 to work on Césaire's political campaign.

The occupation of the island by the Vichy administration would have been particularly difficult for the residents of Fort de France who had for the first time in more than 100 years enjoyed a few decades of widespread economic

²⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, trans. Haakom Chevalier (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), 21-22.

growth. In the wake of the 1902 eruption of Mont Pelee, Fort de France, as the new capital “took on new life and importance. The revival was generated by the influx of many new residents and government funds, both of which spurred modern municipal services”²⁷ and as such the island enjoyed a period of commercial boom brought about by construction, continuing export of sugar and rum, and an expanded retail market.

Renate Zahar wrote that “the events of the Second World War in 1941 had their repercussions even on the remote island of Martinique. Under the pressure of the American blockade the French Governor Robert, a partisan of the Vichy regime, established a military dictatorship, which was supported by the handful of propertied families dominant in Martinique.”²⁸ So, when the 5000 soldiers expropriated the city's bars, restaurants and hotels, sidewalks, taxis and better apartments it generated deep resentment because:

what money failed to do brute power accomplished... In the stores sailors expected to be served before Martinicans. At first segregation came about for economic reasons: with the influx of the military money prices went up and the islanders could no longer afford to be customers. By 1941... the colour lines were firmly established.²⁹

Geismar described the conditions on the island as totalitarian racism, characterized by “rape, racism and rioting”.³⁰ Rape of black women became widespread with little to no intervention from the police or the court. Emmanuel Hansen argued that even though the young Fanon may have been outraged, he did not yet associate the racism with the French presence or the earlier

²⁷ David Marley, *Historic Cities of the Americas* (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 182.

²⁸ Renate Zahar, *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation*, trans. Willfried F Feuser (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), vii.

²⁹ Peter Geismar, *Fanon* (New York: The Dial Press, 1971), 22-23.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

colonial administration.³¹ “Fanon, who had had enough of the Vichy rule in Martinique as well as the racist sailors in dock at Forte de France, joined the resistance”³² largely because he identified the racism as essentially a German threat to French ideals of equal citizenship. In their introduction to *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, Lewis Gordon, et al. echoed the sentiment that the Vichy occupation of Martinique had a lasting and transformative impact on the seventeen year old Frantz Fanon, something he later discussed in his essay, “*Antillais et africains*”.³³ If his joining Aimé Césaire’s 1945 political campaign marked a decisive moment of political participation, the teachings of Césaire and the Vichy occupation of 1941 together represent the activation of Frantz Fanon’s political consciousness.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Jim House argued that in order to understand the particular focus in Fanon’s writing we have to retrace the social and political trajectory prior to 1951. “By the time Fanon came to study at Lyons he had already had the opportunity to observe and experience many different cultures of racism within the French colonial order.”³⁴ At this point in his life his confidence in the French policy of assimilation had to be revised. The war was a defining moment in Fanon’s political education and in his essay, “*Antilleans and Africans*” he acknowledged the changing relations of West Indians towards their blackness, and the framing of black identity in relation to Europe.

After he escaped the racism of the Vichy occupation of Martinique, Fanon was

³¹ Emmanuel Hansen, “Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary,” in *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 56.

³² Nigel Gibson, “Introduction” in *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2003), 4.

³³ Lewis Gordon, Denean Sharley-Whiting and Rene White, “Introduction” in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, eds. Lewis Gordon, et al. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 2.

³⁴ Jim House, “Colonial Racism in the ‘metropole’: reading *Peau noir, masques blancs* in context” in *Frantz Fanon’s BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS*, ed. Maxim Silvermann (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 48.

confronted by the racial stratification of the Free French Army which operated on a sliding hierarchy: white 'metropolitan' French, white 'colonial settler' French, Antillean, other non-white French citizens, Arab-berber North Africans (Muslims), and finally, black Africans.³⁵ He related a number of stories of Senegalese soldiers being treated terribly by their fellow soldiers in the Free French army and he recalled how Senegalese soldiers were often put on the frontlines of war with inadequate weapons. Thus they often simply served as a buffer against the enemy and would be gunned down or maimed before the regular forces would follow them into battle.

Likewise Fanon found that this institutional racism persisted after the war, and he found that this was most evident in the different reception black soldiers received from the general population. Bulhan noted that "the racism and humiliation Fanon and his friends experienced in the French Army was only exceeded by the abuses that the French populace, they came to free, poured upon them. When, for instance, these black soldiers disembarked in the port city of Toulon, in central France, they found the residents extremely hostile and racist."³⁶ Francois Tosquelles recalled Fanon telling him that racism in Lyons was so widespread that he was once arrested for walking on the street with his (white) fiancé and was accused of being involved in white slavery.³⁷ Julia Kristeva wrote that:

nowhere is one more a foreigner than in France. The coherence of the mosaic known as France, bonded by royal and republican administration as well as by lycees and the literary institutions, rejects the notion of difference and sets aside for the foreigner a solitary curiosity, the weird charm of which soon prove to be a source of scorn.³⁸

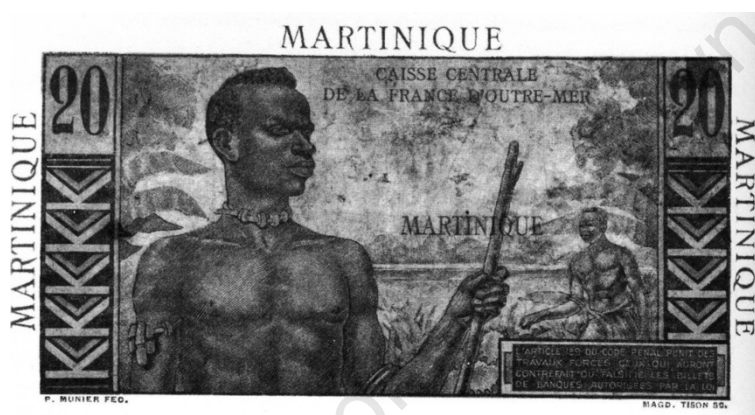
³⁵ Ibid., 49.

³⁶ Hussein Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*, 28.

³⁷ Francois Tosquelles, "Frantz Fanon et la psychothérapie institutionnelle" *Sud/ Nord: folies et cultures*, No.14 (2001): 167-174.

³⁸ Julia Kristeva, *National without Nationalism*, trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 30.

Thus for several years after Martinique's incorporation as a French Overseas Department and despite the Césaire administration's emphasis on modernizing Martinique, French currency for Martinique continued to depict its people as primitive, scantily clothed and situated in an exotic context. Thus Fanon found himself persistently confronted by the contradiction between the French promise of universal suffrage and the reality of French representation of blacks as primitive and under-developed. See below an example of 1950s Martinican currency:



In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon set out to prove his claim that metropolitan France is structurally racist. He analysed a wide range of incidents which he is at pains to remind us are the 'universal experience' of the colonised in France.³⁹ The most enduring incident remains the crucial Parisian metro or tram scene when the Antillean subject is forced to confront his blackness. In response to the remark, "look a negro" the author conveyed his sense of suffocation as the reality of his condition; his blackness closes in around him. Macey observed that "Fixed by the gaze of the white child, Fanon's self-composure disintegrates and his persona gives way to a 'racial epidermal schema'."⁴⁰ He uses this incident not

³⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 31.

⁴⁰ David Macey, "Frantz Fanon, or the Difficulty of being Martinican," in *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 58 (Autumn 2004), 211-223.

only to confront and analyse the racism of the white metropolitan commuters but also he considers his own complicity in the discourses of alienation. Fanon wrote:

I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? But I did not want this revision, this thematization. All I wanted was to be a man among other men.⁴¹

Fanon pointed to the forces that produced this predicament of self-recognition when in his essay, 'West Indians and Africans' he argued that prior to World War II, "in every West Indian... there was not only the certainty of superiority over the African but the certainty of a fundamental difference. The African was a Negro and the West Indian was a European."⁴² Fanon asserted that there was an evolutionary trajectory wherein the African suffered a "primitive mentality", driven by bodily impulses in social and sacred relations, whereas the more sophisticated modern Antillean lives according to rationalist civility characterised by bodily containment and composure.⁴³

Thus during this period Fanon's focus was primarily on the alienation of the middle-class Antillean within the French metropole and it was only at the end of *Peau noire* that Fanon made reference to black workers in Abidjan rather than France.⁴⁴ Fanon's work, though decisive, did not always engage that of his contemporaries but David Macey suggested that while there was a great deal of intellectual activity among black intellectuals, such as the Nardal sisters, the exchange of ideas was difficult and Fanon was further disadvantaged because of the fact that he was not based in Paris which had become the centre of anti-

⁴¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 112.

⁴² Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, 20.

⁴³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 124-126.

⁴⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 223.

colonial radicalism.⁴⁵

At the outset of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon made it clear that what he wrote was only valid for the Antillean, but through his reflection he concluded that "in the beginning I wanted to confine myself to the Antilles. But regardless of the consequences, dialectic took the upper hand and I was compelled to see that the Antillean is first of all a Negro."⁴⁶ Nigel Gibson pointed to the fact that it was in "Paris that the Antillean discovers a new route, discovers Africa, discovers his negritude roots."⁴⁷ Thus in the end Fanon's decisive political realization was the impossibility of whiteness, the redundancy of assimilation and the absolute necessity of black self-recognition as a prerequisite of overcoming colonialism, whether through acts of subversion, refusal or violent resistance.

FANON'S WRITING

His two definitive texts, *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, are to an extent an indication of the conceptual turns in the life of Fanon. In his article, "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition", Homi Bhabha suggested that the two texts could be articulated as respectively concerned with the politics of narcissism and the politics of nationalism.⁴⁸ *Black Skin, White Mask*, published in 1952, appearing well before Fanon had ever been to Algeria, addressed dysfunctions of oppression and a range of complex responses.

These responses were largely derived from the impact of colonialism on the psyche of the native, but were also concerned with making sense of the

⁴⁵ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 132.

⁴⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 222.

⁴⁷ Nigel Gibson, "Introduction" in *Rethinking Fanon: The continuing Dialogue*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 35.

⁴⁸ Homi Bhabha, "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition" in *Remaking History*, eds. B Kruger and P Mariani (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989), 146.

ambivalent material interest of the national bourgeois. *The Wretched of the Earth* on the other hand, published posthumously but containing work produced immediately prior to his death, concerned itself with the project of decolonization. It looked beyond the Algerian struggle, to include the push for national independence within the Third World more generally. It is noteworthy that in his concluding remarks on the question of national solidarity and resistance to colonialism, Fanon reminded the reader of the centrality of the "new man" of *Black Skin, White Masks* in the drive for freedom from colonialism. In translating some of his earlier thoughts on the transformation of the "new man" in activating the development of a national consciousness in *The Wretched of the Earth* he argued that a total revision of the colonial worldview was required when he wrote: "For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man"⁴⁹

Black Skin, White Masks is the first of four texts by Frantz Fanon which sought to explore the conditions of the colonised as well as their various responses to their predicament. David Lloyd, commenting on *Black Skin, White Masks*, suggested that "the enormous task that this work proposes is the transformation of the non-identity of the black man into the means of dismantling of the discourse of racism in several axes".⁵⁰ This text was often regarded as particularly Caribbean in its focus, and in particular it has been said to be a study of Antillean's social psychology that reflected the general conditions which result from colonialism.

Patrick Williams in Sam Haigh's *Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing* suggested that in this first volume Fanon portrayed the colonised as "captured by the illusion of their Frenchness as long as they remained in the colonies"⁵¹. William

⁴⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Penguin, 1967), 255.

⁵⁰ David Lloyd, "Race under Representation" *Oxford Literary Review* 13, 1-2 (1991): 62-94

⁵¹ Sam Haigh, *Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing: Guadeloupe and Martinique* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1999), 55.

Miles has argued that the French colonial policy of assimilation has produced in the Antilles a particular affinity with metropolitan France that was characterized by economic dependence and supposed political stability.⁵² This reflected a Gramscian notion of colonialism as coercion - it was widely believed that the French colonial policy of assimilation tended to seduce its colonial subjects with the illusion of equality through an emphasis on education as the institution of cultural insemination.

In the Euzhan Palcy's *La Rue Cases Negre (Sugar Cane Alley)* it was made clear that education for French colonialists was held in high regard as the vehicle of progress and mobility and it was so skillfully woven into the script that one cannot but be struck by the pointed announcement that "education is the second door to our freedom." Of course we should note that, like Fanon, Palcy also suggested that religion, inherited from Africa offered a link to a primordial black past but that here too it was framed as the dialectical opposite of development and education.

Every time I recall the expression – education is the second door to our freedom - I imagine that for Fanon and his contemporaries the first door would have been language, specifically, the ability to speak French, as was made abundantly clear in the first chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*. As he grappled with the assimilating force of the French language and education system it became clear that Fanon regarded *Black Skin, White Masks* as a text that would speak back to colonialism, and anticipate another condition beyond imperialism.⁵³

Through the various chapters of this book the reader becomes increasingly aware of how, in their encounter with metropolitan France, the colonised came to the realization that they were not regarded as equal French subjects. This

⁵² William Miles, *Elections and Ethnicity in French Martinique* (New York: Praeger Publisher, 1986), 42.

⁵³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 44.

book thus represented Fanon's moment of confronting the social and political alienation, the realization that he was not so much a citizen, as he was an alien. In the context of French colonialism, the French subjects in the colonies were referred to as *evolve*, which reflected a condition of voluntary assimilation into French culture. Through the pages of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon traced the encounters and contact between the colonised and the coloniser to expose the alienation of the self-divided black subject and to analyse the conditions that cause such alienation. The book is an attempt to overcome this psychic fracture inflicted on the colonized by the realities of colonialism. Fanon refused to simply heal the individual, without addressing the institutions and mechanisms of oppression since he believed that such an enterprise would leave untouched, the condition that brought about black alienation.

Further it appears that in confronting the black self, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* articulated an eschatological encounter with Africa, and it showed how the author came face to face, and grappled with the idea of the black as "primitive". In considering the discourse of Africa in the work of anthropologist Herskowitz in the Caribbean, Kevin Yelvington argued that the image of Africa did find expression in the Antillean popular imagination but often in religious idiom.⁵⁴ Until Herskowitz's scholarly intervention, Africa was seen as a site of distant origin, after the publication of his *The Myth of the Negro Past* the idea of Africa as a source of Caribbean identity and religion found a firm footing in scholarship on the region.⁵⁵

While Fanon's initial impulse was to reject 'the idea of Africa' as pre-modern or a colonial invention, he nonetheless sought to make sense of the idea of the black as being without religion or at least as practicing "natural" or "primitive religion".

⁵⁴ Kevin A. Yelvington, "The Invention of Africa in the Caribbean" in *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*, Kevin A. Yelvington (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2006), 36 and 50.

⁵⁵ Melville Herskowitz, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 293.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon wrote that “sacrifice was the middle point between creation and myself – now I went back no longer to sources but to The Source.”⁵⁶ In this text, Africa was represented as the sacred source that cohered the collective experience of the blacks – the “bitter brotherhood”.⁵⁷ Conversely, Africa as the sacred heart of the suffering black collective was so intellectually suffocating to Fanon that he wrote:

What is one to think of all these manifestations, all these initiations, all these acts? From every direction I am assaulted by the obscenity of dances and of words.⁵⁸

Black Skin, White Masks, at the time of its publication was referred to by Fanon's editor, Francis Jeanson, as a hymn to human freedom. The book was generally regarded as obscure for various reasons. (1) the genre, especially its unconventional use of medical terminology;⁵⁹ (2) Martinique was not on the global political agenda as it was a rather small island with not a great deal of socio-economic appeal; (3) the book emerged at a time when a battle raged for the intellectual and ideological heart of French politics, marked particularly by the adamant advance of existentialism over Marxism and Catholic personalism.⁶⁰

In *Peau noir* Fanon explored the social relations between the colonised and the coloniser from various vantage points. Each chapter offered a focused analysis of the intellectual and educational inferiority complexes that resulted from colonialism. The first chapter considered language and migration as a primary frame for the analysis of the relations between the colony and the metropole. The next few chapters explored two contemporary novels on the relations

⁵⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 125.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁵⁹ David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Life*, 158.

⁶⁰ Michael Kelly, *The Cultural and intellectual Rebuilding of France After the Second World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 156-158.

between blacks and whites: Mayotte Capécia's *Je suis Martiniquais (I Am a Martinican Woman)*, 1948 and René Maran's *Un homme Pareil aux Autres (A Man like Other Men)* 1947. These two chapters, particularly "The Woman of Colour and the White Man", were generally regarded as the weaker sections of the book because of the poor literary analysis due to the fact that Fanon struggled to make a clear distinction between the characters in the book and the authors. However we can presume that his focus here was on interrogating two contemporary novels, both of which were published less than five years before *Black Skin, White Masks* to analyse the social conditions of blacks both in Europe and the colonies. In this regard he attempted to introduce the double-bindedness of black identity and the mutual imbrications of black and white identities.

He then, in the next chapter, sought to debunk the prevailing social and intellectual conception of the colonised's inferiority complex as developed by Octave Mannoni in his *Psychology of Colonization*. Mannoni, based on his work with the Malagasy between 1925 and 1947, argued that the colonised suffered from a predisposition to dependency, in that outside the colonial enterprise, the native lagged behind due to a fear of competition.⁶¹ He argued that the native's inferiority complex antedates colonialism, but that the contact with the coloniser propelled the colonised into a dependency relationship.

Having set out the problematics encountered in his reading of Mannoni, Fanon proceeded to what many regard as the most decisive chapter of the collection, entitled "the lived experience of the black", and sometimes referred to as 'the fact of blackness'. This chapter represented a passionate departure from an otherwise clinical study that sought to propose a collective cure for the colonized that was psychologically rooted in the social conditions of colonialism. Fanon was concerned here with the meaning of blackness and he

⁶¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 84-89.

demonstrated the ways in which both the racist coloniser and the nativist (of negritude) argued for the existence of an essential unchanging black identity. Though passionate and polemic in its tone, this chapter offered a critical and groundbreaking analysis that advanced the notion of black identity as a social construct.

Peau noir is about anti-Black racism in the colonial context and also about racism in general; it is about Martinique and the French metropole and yet it resonates far beyond those places; and it is about the immediate post-war period – in which the economic, political and ideological power of the West to colonise the minds and bodies of others was being challenged by new discourses and struggles for liberation by the victims of that power.⁶²

Unlike *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon's subsequent books would be more programmatic in nature. Although his penultimate text, *The Wretched of the Earth* remains the most widely read of his texts on anti-colonial political resistance, his second book, *L'An V de la Revolution Algerienne (Studies in a Dying Colonialism)*, addressed five social aspects of the Algerian revolution. Based on his experience as a psychiatrist at Blida-Joinville, and his subsequent activism with FLN, the book deals with the changing role of Muslim women; the use of radio in the struggle for independence, the effect that the revolution had on the Algerian Muslim families, medicine and colonialism, and finally the position of European minorities in Algeria. David Macey remarked that *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* was not so much a book about the policies and practices of the FLN, but rather focused on the impact of the revolution on the Algerian family. This book was a testimony to the therapeutic concerns of Fanon for both the victim and the perpetrator. I regard this as a curious insight into the mind of the man who made the uncompromising call for the violent confrontation between the oppressor and the colonized as a means to activate revolution.

⁶² Max Silvermann, "Introduction" in *Frantz Fanon's BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS*, ed. Max Silvermann, 2.

The tension between traditional Algerian society and Fanon as a modern, educated man runs through the entire book. According to Fanon, for example, all European men wanted to unveil and rape Algerian women and he found Algerians as suspicious of the relation between colonialists and European medical practitioners. He has been criticized for too easily conceding to traditionalists who regarded local Islamic practices as necessarily anti-colonial even when such traditions failed to fit into his idea of the modern Algeria. While he opposed the violent racism of the French in Algeria, Fanon also had to contend with nationalists who held the belief that "Arabic is our language. Islam is our religion. Algeria is our country."⁶³

Jock McCulloch argued that, unlike in his first book, Fanon abandoned his commitment to the psychiatric sciences in favour of political action and he no longer vacillated between accusing ethno-psychiatrists of methodological naivety, because they ignored the social context of their patients, and of moral weakness in the face of injustice. *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* represents the first book within which Fanon confronted them as agents of the colonial system. On the other hand the book also articulated Fanon's views on the role of culture in the decolonization process. He sought to explore indigenous religious and cultural responses to European domination and concluded that colonial disruption of traditional social relations produced a deep anxiety within the population.

Fanon saw this inferiority complex as an effect of colonization and concluded in *Black Skin, White Masks* that it was created in a colonized people when their local culture was sacrificed for the culture of the mother country⁶⁴ McCulloch argued that Fanon found that "under the colonial conditions the Algerian's

⁶³ Marie-Aimée Hélie-Lucas, "Women, Nationalism and Religion in the Algeria Struggle for Liberation" in *Rethinking Fanon, The Continuing Dialogue*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 275.

⁶⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 18 and 32.

response to even genuine offers of help became indiscriminating, as he perceived 'the doctor, the engineer, the school teacher, the policeman, the rural constable, through the haze of an almost organic confusion'."⁶⁵

Robert Bernasconi suggested that *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* is a critical text for understanding Fanon's philosophical transition from the psychologically oriented *Black Skin, White Masks* to the more politically direct *The Wretched of the Earth*. He contended that this book made it possible for Fanon to resolve some of the concerns that seemed insoluble in his earlier work.⁶⁶ Bulhan saw *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* as a sociological masterpiece that was both timely and momentous, and that it made such a huge impact on the French intellectual scene that it was banned within six months of its publication.⁶⁷ Fanon situated the collective experience of *Black Skin, White Masks* and illustrated the transformation of Algerian people because of their shared experience of oppression. He explained that regardless of their role in the anti-colonial struggle, whether women carried bombs, grenades, machine-gun clips, and so on, all Algerian women were under suspicion. Thus "this was the period during which men, women, children, the whole Algerian people, experienced at one and the same time their national vocation and the recasting of the new Algerian society".⁶⁸ He then suggested that as a result of having participated in the revolution that the Algerian people were "prepared today to assume modern and democratic responsibilities of exceptional moment."⁶⁹ In *A Dying Colonialism*, the answer to the question of whether an oppressed people will win its struggle from oppression was already given:

⁶⁵ Jock McCulloch, *Colonial Psychiatry and "the African Mind"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 133.

⁶⁶ Robert Bernasconi, "Eliminating the Cycle of Violence: The Place of A Dying Colonialism in Fanon's Revolutionary Thought," in *Philosophia Africana*, 4.2 (August 2001): 17-25.

⁶⁷ Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Fanon and the Psychology of the Oppressed*, 33.

⁶⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakom Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 62.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 179.

We say firmly that Algerian men and Algerian society have stripped themselves of the mental sedimentation and of the emotional and intellectual handicaps which resulted from 130 years of oppression.⁷⁰

The same time that the colonized man braces himself to reject oppression, a radical transformation takes place within him which makes any attempt to maintain the colonial system impossible and shocking.⁷¹

Of course by the time Fanon wrote "Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness" in *The Wretched of the Earth* he appeared to have suspended this earlier optimism about modernity, or perhaps he had had to revise his opinion on the redundancy of indigenous traditions. Gibson viewed the five case studies of *A Dying Colonialism* as an "opportunity for radically new behaviour in both public and private life, a chance for cultural regeneration and creation where positive concepts of self-determination, not contingent on the colonial status quo, are generated."⁷² Finally Bernasconi argued that "what makes *A Dying Colonialism* such a remarkable text is that it is one of those rare books that express the hope, confidence, and exhilaration that arise occasionally in revolutionary movements. This mood in Fanon's writing did not continue to *The Wretched of the Earth*, but it accounts for the language of a new humanism in the later book."⁷³ He concluded that without *A Dying Colonialism* and the evidence it offers, the hope offered by *The Wretched of the Earth* is merely utopian.

Published in 1961 and written during the last few months of Frantz Fanon's life, *The Wretched of the Earth*, like Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, questioned the basic assumptions that underlie the structure of society. Foucault argued that certain technologies such as prisons, family, mental institutions, and

⁷⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, 179.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁷² Nigel Gibson, "Radical Mutation: Fanon's Untidy Dialectic of History" in *Rethinking Fanon*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 419.

⁷³ Robert Bernasconi, "Eliminating the Cycle of Violence: The Place of *A Dying Colonialism* in Fanon's Revolutionary Thought," in *Philosophia Africana*, 4.2 (August 2001): 17-25.

other institutions and cultural traits of French society were deployed to organize power within a society. Fanon, having critically considered a number of social aspects of the revolution in *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* went on to analyse the technologies of control in the colonies.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* he explored a number of critical questions for overcoming those mechanisms of domination that were frustrating the pursuit of Algerian independence. In response to brutal colonial policing practices, he began to question whether violence was a tactic that should be employed to eliminate colonialism. He asked whether native intellectuals, who have adopted western methods of thought, slowed down decolonization and if they should be considered part of the same technology of control that the white world employs to exploit the colonized. While he was heralded as visionary in his analysis and critique of colonialism, he has also been widely criticized, most notably by Hannah Arendt.⁷⁴ Much of the criticism against *The Wretched of the Earth* concerned Fanon's apparent exaltation of violence as a necessary precondition for the struggle for independence.

Winner of the 1961 Prix Goncourt, *The Wretched of the Earth* has been described as the handbook of third world revolutions and has often been understood as a work of modern revolutionary theory which concerns the psychology of the colonized and their path to liberation. Fanon offered a brilliant and impassioned examination of the role of violence in effecting historical change. So strident and uncompromising was his theory of violence, that he has been referred to as an 'apostle of hate' and a 'prisoner of violence'.⁷⁵ Notwithstanding the wave of criticism that this text received, it nonetheless presented a coherent critique of the devastating effects of reactionary and bigoted nationalisms. Homi Bhabha suggested that *Wretched of the Earth* represented a body of work that allowed

⁷⁴ Hannah Arendt, "Panel Discussion on Violence" in *Dissent, Power and Confrontation*, ed. A Klein (New York: McGraw Hill, 1971), 65.

⁷⁵ Hussein Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of the Oppressed*, 144.

activists to move beyond narrow-minded ethno-nationalism or bourgeois nationalist formalism.⁷⁶

Whereas in *Black Skin, Whites Masks* "Africa" and self-recognition marked the sites of the sacred, in *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon sought to produce spiritual and intellectual resources from a study of violence and national culture. Fanon advanced an eschatological violence which emanated from the "new man", who, endowed with self-recognition, surrendered his colonized body to the cause of liberation such that the struggle against the colonialist became sacred.⁷⁷ While he wrestled with both "revealed" religion and "primitive" religion as threatening to undermine the anti-colonial struggle, he nonetheless recognised that the national culture should provide the spiritual resources to cohere the nation lest they should become "individuals without anchor, without a horizon, colorless, stateless, rootless – a race of angels."⁷⁸ Thus, imagining triumph over the oppressors, Fanon proposed an idea – not unlike Renan's conception of the nation as a spiritual principle - that national culture should be the site for the production of the sacred in the postcolony. He argued that the native intellectuals become, not the *undertakers* but the *caretakers* of the sacred,⁷⁹ and that through poetry, performance, art and architecture new narratives of the sacred are produced.

Traditionally, the three chapters that have received the greatest amount of attention and critique are 'Concerning Violence', 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' and 'On National Culture'. In the first chapter Fanon unpacked the dynamics of violence in the colonial context and he produced a sustained

⁷⁶ Homi Bhabha, "Foreword: Framing Fanon" in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. R. Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), xvi.

⁷⁷ Marie Perinbam, *Holy Violence* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1982), 71.

⁷⁸ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 175.

⁷⁹ A distinction that I borrowed from Ivan Strenski in his discussion of the polemics of E.B. Tyler and Max Muller on animism and the origins of religion. Ivan Strenski, *Thinking About Religion* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006), 92.

critique of violence in its structural, institutional and structural dimensions.⁸⁰ He demonstrated the various ways the colonists asserted their power through brutally violent acts as well as through exploiting local ethnic tensions and the use of an army of specialists to advance its agenda – “anthropologist, doctors, teachers and religious zealots.”⁸¹

Thus, for Fanon, the colony was occupied by two opposing forces and their “...first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together - that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler - was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannon.”⁸² Fanon argued that the colonised should produce a corresponding violence that has been variously described as ‘therapeutic’, ‘cathartic’, ‘detoxifying’ and concluded that ultimately violence frees “the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it...restores his self-respect.”⁸³

Before moving on to the next decisive chapter on ‘The Pitfalls of National Culture’, he dedicated a chapter to the strengths and weaknesses of spontaneity. I see these chapters as coupled since he addressed two issues that could undermine the postcolonial state. The first was the vital and spontaneous force of the rural masses that, if unchecked, could undermine the national liberation project. He was anxious that if the appeal of religious leaders and traditional cultural practices emerged as the organizing force of the rural poor it would alienate the urban educated classes and thus create a schism in the liberation movement. He saw rural communities as consisting of an uneducated *lumpen proletariat* that was shielded from the national party by traditional chiefs and religious leaders who feared their own extinction.⁸⁴ Fanon set out to illustrate that it was only when rural communities and other disaffected groups are

⁸⁰ Hussein Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of the Oppressed*, 138.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁸² Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 28.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

recognised by the nationalist leadership that a national revolutionary project can be activated. He asserted that "without that struggle, without the knowledge of the practice of action, there's nothing but a fancy-dress parade and the blare of the trumpets."⁸⁵

Likewise, 'The Pitfalls of National Culture' highlighted that after independence, the middle class will act not in the interests of the people but they will seek to line their own pockets. He described this phenomenon as a bourgeois dictatorship, a "sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of a huckster, only too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial power hands out to it."⁸⁶ Fanon argued that this was born out of a desire to replace the colonizer, to be the coloniser – as he had eloquently argued in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

the look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possessions - all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible.⁸⁷

Having outlined the previous two chapters, to show top-down and bottom-up ways in which the national liberation could be undermined and ultimately betrayed, Fanon produced a theory of national culture. He argued that because of the cultural hegemony that goes with colonialism, native intellectuals responded by rejecting Western culture and embracing pre-colonial history as a way of life. As a result, the native intellectual set a high value on indigenous customs and traditions. "The sari becomes sacred, and shoes that come from Paris or Italy are left off in favour of pampooties, while suddenly the language of the ruling power is felt to burn your lips."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ibid., 118.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 141.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 178.

Echoing something of his story of the intimate but vile encounter of racism on a Paris tram, in the 'lived experience of the black', the native intellectual goes through similar phases of transition, from assimilation, then revulsion, to self-recognition before finally engaging the fighting phase.⁸⁹ In this chapter Fanon also outlined some suggestions for the manufacturing of a new national consciousness based on the transformation of tradition. For Fanon it was only in the 'armed struggle' that the native will find integration from the alienation of the Self, introduced by colonialism. The political reality was seen to be the 'first truth'⁹⁰ of the nation and thus the artist, performer and the poet would give voice to the people's revolution, evident from Fanon's belief that "It is not enough to try and free oneself by repeating proclamations and denials."⁹¹ Because for Fanon "culture is more and more cut off from the events of today"⁹² the native intellectuals became both the manufacturers and the guardians of a new national consciousness as they refashioned the national history, identity and the revolution. He argued that national culture rehabilitates and offers a hope for the future so profound that at "in the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium it is responsible for an important change in the native."⁹³ According to Fanon:

when you speak of that unique thing in man's life that is represented by the fact of opening up new horizons, by bringing light to your own country and by raising yourself and your people to their feet, then you must collaborate on the physical plane.⁹⁴

Benjamin Graves suggested that Fanon was acutely aware of the paradoxical nature of national culture, in that while the idea of a national culture was critical for the emergence of revolution, it paradoxically also limited the enterprise because it re-inscribed an essentialist, totalizing, fetishized, often middle-class specific understanding of "nation" rather than encouraging a nuanced

⁸⁹ Ibid., 179.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 181.

⁹¹ Ibid, 182.

⁹² Ibid., 175.

⁹³ Ibid., 169.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 187.

articulation of the oppressed's cultural heterogeneity across class lines.⁹⁵ Fanon believed that the only way to overcome the paradox was for the native intellectual – the writer, the artist and the performer – to actively re-define national culture. He understood national culture as not a given but as a set of values that are produced through a 'body of effort':

A national culture is not a folklore, not an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature. It is not made up of the inert dregs of gratuitous actions, that is to say actions which are less and less attached to the ever-present reality of the people. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence.⁹⁶

In the final section of the book Fanon addressed four mental and social disorders he diagnosed and treated whilst he worked among the colonised of Algeria before he went on to conclude that "Europe undertook leadership of the world with ardour, cynicism and violence."⁹⁷ He ended this passionate narrative by reminding his reader of the humanist underpinnings of his political work with this passionate appeal: (a theme that ran through all his writing)

Let us reconsider the question of mankind. Let us reconsider the question of cerebral reality and the cerebral mass of all humanity, whose connexions must be increased, whose channels must be diversified and whose messages must be re-humanised.⁹⁸

The final book, *Towards the African Revolution* was a collection of essays, posthumously compiled by Fanon's publisher, Francois Maspero, in collaboration with his family. These essays were presented at conferences and published in

⁹⁵ Benjamin Graves, "Postcolonial Discourse: Theories of Colonialism and Postcolonialism" <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/fanon/fanon2.html> (accessed 12 October 2008).

⁹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 188.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 253.

various publications from 1952 until his death in 1961. They addressed a wide range of issues, starting out with issues relating to the representations of Africans, and their relations to Antilles before he proceeded to a broad critique of the European left. The second half of this volume dealt largely with the question of African unity and Fanon's attempts to identify avenues for the further development of a political enterprise that would lead to the liberation of Africa as a whole. In his introduction to the volume, Maspero remarked that these essays "constitute a guiding thread by which we may follow him more closely from day to day, the itinerary of a mind in constant evolution, growing ever broader and richer while continuing to be true to itself."⁹⁹

FANONISM

From the outset Fanon's writings have provoked strong opinions, both in support and in opposition. Although he struggled to find a suitable publisher for a period, partly due to the ideological polarization of the French intellectual community, and partly due to his own stubbornness, he eventually found an editor. And Francis Jeanson, notwithstanding his reservations about the text, announced it as "a hymn to human freedom" which should be seen as the result of Fanon's adamant pursuit of the ideals of freedom outside of the constraints of colonial racism and negritude. In *Black Skin White Masks* he sought to argue that there is no such thing as an essential and unchanging black identity and that human freedom is best pursued outside the discourses of nationalism or nativism. Wilder suggested that "*Black Skin, White Masks* is remarkable in its attempt to work through colonial racism as a pathology and a legacy on both psychic and social levels simultaneously"¹⁰⁰ and he argued that for Fanon "if there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: primarily socio-

⁹⁹ Francois Maspero, "Editorial Note" in Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, transl. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1988), vii.

¹⁰⁰ Gary Wilder, "Race, Reason, Impasse: Césaire, Fanon, and the Legacy of Emancipation" *Radical History Review* Issue 90 (Fall 2004): 31-61.

economic; subsequently, then the internalization-or, better, the epidermilization of inferiority... it will be seen that the black man's alienation is not an individual question. ..let us say this is a question of the socio-diagnostic."¹⁰¹

But to return to Fanon, during his lifetime he attracted a great deal of attention and for the first few decades after his death he attracted even more interest from academics and activists alike. Many have attempted to fix Fanon, and/or his work in one or another ideological frame but this has proved rather difficult. This could be due to the fact that his work addressed such a wide range of disciplinary issues, the fact that the writer's reflection of the colonial condition was somewhat of a moving target in that he kept on pursuing new routes of engagement, shifting from Martinique to France, France to Algeria and then towards a pan-Africanism and universalism.

Just as significant was the fact that, in pursuing a critical analysis of the condition of the colonized, Fanon's theorizing emerged, it has been suggested, out of a tradition of bricolage, whereby he drew on a range of philosophical traditions - none of which in themselves addressed the question under consideration, but provided Fanon with the intellectual and critical 'tools' to fashion an interpretive framework.¹⁰² Macey suggested that it was a kind of DIY insofar as he used those intellectual traditions and theories that were current and at hand to produce a theoretical framework which was racially inflected. This multidisciplinary reading and liberal use of scientific and philosophical resources meant that Fanon's message resonated with diverse interest groups, not only because of the content but also because of the rhetoric of practice.

Fanon has been referred to as a theorist, a philosopher, a revolutionary, humanist and a democrat, to name but a few. What resulted from the increasing appreciation of his work was a form of intellectual production that has come to

¹⁰¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 10-11.

¹⁰² David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 162.

be referred to as Fanon Studies or 'Fanonism'. The wide application or imagined relevance of Fanon is also illustrated by the titles of such articles as Patrick Elhen's "Frantz Fanon: A Spiritual Biography" (2000), Hussein Adam's "Frantz Fanon as a Democratic Theorist" (1993), Horace Sutton's review of "The Revolutionary as Prophet" (1971) Hussein Bulhan "Frantz Fanon: The Revolutionary Psychiatrist" (1980), David Hanley's "Frantz Fanon: Revolutionary Nationalist" (1976), Christopher Lasch's "Frantz Fanon: The Narcissistic Personality", T Stewart's "Fanon: New Messiah of Black Militants" (1971) and of course Lou Turner and John Allan's "Frantz Fanon, World Revolutionary" (1999). Other than in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, violence and nationalist politics, all fields traditionally associated with Fanon, his work has also been invoked and appropriated in the fields of cinema, radio, literature, orality and of course postcolonial theory. Quite significantly his work has received steady criticism from feminists, gender theorists and queer-politic scholars for its decided lack of attention to issues of concern for these constituencies.

Considering how frequently references to Fanon are alluded to in religious terms, such as 'spiritual', 'new messiah' or 'prophet' to name a few, it is quite surprising that his work has not attracted more attention from scholars in the field of religious studies. Elsewhere I have referred to Fanon as the *sacred cow* of African nationalism¹⁰³ precisely because, while he was readily invoked in support of, or in opposition to certain nationalist or repressive regimes, his view on religion, for example, has gone uninterrogated. Apart from selected chapters in books such as Sekyi-Otu's *Dialectic of Experience* or Sharpley-Whiting's *Frantz Fanon: Conflict and Feminism*, neither of which addressed the issue of religion, except insofar as religion contributed to the books' primary argument, there are few articles that explicitly addressed the question of religion in the work of Fanon. Fouzi Slisli's short article on Islam in *The Wretched of the Earth* went some way towards a more confident treatment of religion in Fanon, but it was hampered by the writer's

¹⁰³ Federico Settler, "The Persistence of the Sacred in Postcolonial Africa", Masters Dissertation, University of Cape Town, December 2006.

theological interest. Even Michael Lackey's thorough and insightful article, "Frantz Fanon and the Theology of Colonization"¹⁰⁴ repeated the preoccupation with the theistic/ atheistic argument instead of seeking to understand Fanon's engagements with religion in general, not just the theology of the French "civilizing mission". It is in this context that I propose to develop an archaeology and aesthetic of religion in the life and works of Frantz Fanon.

In *Frantz Fanon A Portrait* Alice Cherki framed her work on Fanon as a reexamination of the "extraordinary trajectory of an extraordinary man by consulting not (*only*) his writings but fragments of his life, in a certain sense, an exercise in memory by proxy, a remembering "for another" filled with lacunae, discoveries, and amazingly few encounters of reconstruction".¹⁰⁵ Recovering an essential Fanon is clearly an elusive exercise since we are dealing not simply with texts but also with popular narratives which assumed sacred meaning in the life of the readers, scholars and activists. This ranged from such diverse interests as the revolutionary violence, the anti-colonial sentiment in the wake of World War II, the ideas of national culture developed in *Wretched of the Earth*, narratives of narcissism and black self-fashioning developed in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and the particular relevance of Fanon to black consciousness movements in North America and South Africa. In the biography of Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa, Mark Gevisser observed that:

Back in Johannesburg in 1962, just before Thabo Mbeki's departure into exile, a startling new book was doing the rounds. Written by a Caribbean psychiatrist, who had participated in the Algerian revolution, it was to become the handbook for the struggle against colonialism.¹⁰⁶

In the US, Black Panther leader Stokely Carmichael claimed Fanon as one of his

¹⁰⁴ Michael Lackey, "Frantz Fanon and the Theology of Colonization," in *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, Vol.3, No.2 (Fall 2002): 1-29.

¹⁰⁵ Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 1.

¹⁰⁶ Mark Gevisser, *The Dream Deferred: Thabo Mbeki* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2007), 162.

"patron saints" and Eldridge Cleaver boasted that "every brother on a roof top" could quote Fanon but despite this Fanon could certainly not be described as a black nationalist. Ciaran Mulholland recalled that in 1968, a journalist noted "Fanon's book, '*Les Damnés de la terre*' piled up with 'Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung' and works by Régis Debray, when visiting Palestinian militants in Jordan. In the late 1960s, a Cuban 'Movimento Black Power' developed and for a brief period its Afro hair-styled members discussed Fanon and other black writers until the suppression of the group in 1971. In 1968, a spokesman for the separatist Front de Liberation Quebécois (FLQ) defined himself as a "Quebécois proletarian, one of America's white niggers, one of the 'wretched of the earth'".¹⁰⁷ Eric J Sundquist wrote that after its publication, *The Wretched of the Earth*, partly reflecting the political climate of the time, became the "scripture for rebels around the world, from Algeria to Vietnam, from the West bank to the United States."¹⁰⁸

Eddie S. Gaude, argued that traditions such as 'black theology' emerged as a response to the historical moment when, in the context of celebrated black nationalism, black Christians faced severe criticism from an increasingly secular movement. He pointed particularly to the Black Panther movement's use of Mao's *Red Book* as well as to the romanticization or reification of African traditions, such as Maulana Karenga's cultural theory called Kwaaida. The ritual practice of Kwanzaa was one example of the attempts to forge a black political subjectivity steeped in Africa and the experience of the global black collective. Gaude wrote that in "echoing Frantz Fanon, the black revolution was in part a struggle for the minds of black people."¹⁰⁹

Anthony B. Pinn invoked Fanon to develop his argument that the black body is

¹⁰⁷ Ciaran Mulholland "Review of Frantz Fanon: A Life" 30 April 2002
<<http://www.geocities.com/socialistparty/Fanon.htm>>

¹⁰⁸ Eric J Sindquist, *Strangers in the Land* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 279.

¹⁰⁹ Eddie S. Gaude, *In a Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the politics of Black America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 73.

the most overlooked cultural artifact insofar as “the lived experience of the black” was captured by its physicality. He suggested that, as such, the body assumed both religious and economic significance in North America.¹¹⁰ Presumably, the same can be said of the black body in the colonial context, where the black bodily rhythms and functions were determined by the ecology of the plantation. This relation between the body and the ecology of slavery, critiqued by Fanon, will be further developed in the next chapter, when I consider the diasporic religions' emphasis on the informative and performative importance of the black body. Finally, like Steve Biko, the South African anti-apartheid martyr who saw an intimate relationship between black theology and Fanon's hypothesis of black self-recognition¹¹¹, James Cone recalling the role of black theology during the American civil right period, wrote in *African American Religious Studies*:

Fanon captured our imagination because his analysis rang true... The application of Fanon to Black Theology affected our understanding of our theological task. We now realized it consisted in something more than simply ebonizing European concepts in theology. Gayraud Wilmore and Charles Long saw the necessity and complexity of this task much clearer than most of us. They took the lead in directing Black theologians to Africa first and then to Latin America and Asia.¹¹²

It is widely agreed that by the mid-1960's, sometime after his death, Fanon became an icon for both anti-colonial struggles in the third world and for political activists in the civil right movements in North America. This trend was accompanied by a brief period of militant Fanonian scholarship, as his work gained currency in departments of politics, sociology and psychology. Then for

¹¹⁰ Anthony B. Pinn, “Black Theology, Black Bodies and Pedagogy”, in *Crosscurrents*, Vol.20, Issue 1-2 (2000): 196-202.

¹¹¹ Nigel Gibson “Black Consciousness 1977-1987: The Dialectics of Liberation in South Africa”, *Africa Today*, Vol.35, No.1: Black Consciousness In South Africa (1st Quarter, 1988): 1-29.; See also Steve Biko, *I Write what I Like* (London: Heineman, 1979)

¹¹² James H. Cone, “Black Theology as Liberation Theology” *African American Religious Studies*, ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), 193.

about a decade or so, Fanon was relegated to obscurity and this was reflected by the aptly titled article by Kobena Mercer, "Busy in the Ruins of a Wretched Phantasia" who wrote:

these changing circumstances profoundly alter the way in which Fanon's writings speaks to our contemporary crises. Whereas earlier generations prioritized the Marxist themes of Fanon's later work, above all *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1961 at the height of the optimism of the post-war social movements, the fading fortunes of the independent left during the 1980s provided the backdrop to renewed interest in *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon's first and most explicitly psychoanalytical text.¹¹³

In their introduction to *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, Gordon, et al. suggested that Fanon Studies could be characterized by four stages. The first stage comprised of the various applications of his work or reaction thereto, such as the revolutionary initiatives of Che Guevara and Huey Newton or the liberal responses from Hannah Arendt and Sidney Hook. The second stage they identified as a period characterized by biographical interest, when many scholars sought to recover the 'life of Fanon', only to find that their emphasis on Fanon's extraordinariness only served to produce a "mythical pathological Fanon".¹¹⁴ The third stage was marked by a period of research into the significance of Fanon to political theory as reflected by the work of Renate Zahar and Emmanuel Hansen. According to Gordon, et al., the fourth stage was characterized by the mushrooming contribution by scholars linked to the field of cultural and postcolonial studies. This stage was also marked by a characteristic critique of Fanon, by such scholars as Spivack, Bhabha, Parry, and others.

While these critiques ranged in their political designation, whether misogyny, anti-Arab or petit bourgeois, they all tended to be premised on characterizing

¹¹³ Kobena Mercer 'Busy in the Ruins of a Wretched Phantasia' in *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*, ed. A.C. Alessandrini (London: Routledge, 1999), 197.

¹¹⁴ Lewis Gordon, Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Rene White, "Introduction: Five Stages of Fanon Studies" in *Fanon: A Critical Reader* Gordon, et al. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 5.

liberation theorists as either 'modernist' or 'totalizing'.¹¹⁵ More recently the field has witnessed the emergence of scholarship on Fanon that does not seek to claim more for Fanon than can be evidenced, nor to denigrate his contribution. David Macey's, *Fanon: A Life* was one such text and for Gordon et al. it represented the fifth and final stage because it acknowledged that Fanon "was not only a psychiatrist or a philosopher or a revolutionary. He was a complex figure who utilized all of the disciplinary resources, whether 'literary' or 'scientific', at his disposal."¹¹⁶

Alice Cherki stated that "Fanon live his experience; he internalized and pondered racial, political, and cultural oppression, and revealed the continuity between the human body and the body politic; identifying the bottomless alienation and the violence that perpetuated it and resulted in the depersonalization of individuals and entire peoples, he searched for ways to reverse it, to furnish new points of reference."¹¹⁷ Of course Fanon grew up and had some of his most formative experiences in Martinique, an island that's identity was shaped for a long period by the dislocation that resulted from slavery.

Katherine Browne, in writing on the island's history, suggested that "in order to communicate with each other, slaves forged new, creole languages... Music, dance, storytelling and religion became expressive anchors of their humanity and affirmed a group identity in the midst of individual misery and alienation."¹¹⁸ It was particularly this perspective on Fanon that gained currency during the advent of postcolonial studies during the 1980s with its interest in critical inquiry at the level of cultural politics. Stuart Hall argued that it was exactly such new points of reference that "provides the privileged ground of Fanon's return and of the

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁷ Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, 203.

¹¹⁸ Katherine E. Browne, *Creole Economics*, 20.

contestation over him",¹¹⁹ although he concluded that such intellectual work would invariably privilege Fanon's political commitment over his psychoanalytic theory.

During recent years the term and idea of the "postcolonial" has been increasingly utilised within the academy to demarcate a field within which to articulate those concerns that seek to make sense of the complexity of the colonial condition and its aftermath. Postcolonialism is said to concern itself with the mutual imbrication of the coloniser and the colonised¹²⁰ and that it investigates the ways in which narratives about colonialism made Western man definitionally non-Eastern and handed him a self-image and a world-view which were basically responses to the needs of colonialism. This field thus provides fertile ground for the re-invigoration of interest in both Fanon's psycho-analytical and political interests. As a point of clarification I wish to refer to the critical study, *The Empire Writes Back*, by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, in which they proposed that we should read the postcolonial as a project of problematising or subverting conceptions of colonialism rather than simply as the period coming after colonialism. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study I will particularly draw on the idea of postcolonialism as a field of enquiry into western ways of objectifying and domesticating its Other.

Since these structures of knowledge production developed largely out of encounters at various colonial frontiers, Monglia insisted that postcolonialism was not simply concerned with the period of colonisation and its immediate aftermath, but significantly with presenting a comprehensive critique of western structures of knowledge and power. Monglia observed that "Postcolonialism is an umbrella term that covers different critical approaches which deconstruct

¹¹⁹ Stuart Hall, "The Afterlife of Frantz Fanon: Why Fanon? Why Now? Why *Black Skin White Masks*?" in *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read (London: ICA, 1996), 15.

¹²⁰ Ali Rattansi, "Postcolonialism and its Discontents", *Society and Economy*, 26.4 (1999): 480-500.

European thought about colonisation. In this perspective the term postcolonial referred not to a simple periodisation but rather to a methodological revision which enabled a wholesale critique of western structures of knowledge and power."¹²¹ It thus came as no surprise that Fanon should have held such pride of place since he addressed some of these questions of recognition of the black self in *Black Skin, Whites Masks* and he analysed the challenges of the postcolony imagined in *The Wretched of the Earth*. His insights in the essays on the 'pitfalls of national consciousness' and 'on national culture' assumed a prophetic significance in the postcolonial context.

Fanon was a psychiatrist by training, political philosopher and political analyst by choice, and journalist by trade who left us a significant corpus of writings, all of which have been (poorly) translated into English. Guy Martins believed that it should come as no surprise, then, that "over the last four decades, Fanon's work has been interpreted from a wide variety of disciplines, standpoints, and perspectives, and that he has been viewed in turn as psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, philosopher, political analyst, journalist-propagandist, and cultural critic."¹²²

Frantz Fanon, as a champion of the anti-colonial struggle in Africa, and the colonised world more generally, was drawn upon in the field of postcolonial studies as a theorist of Africa, black identities, and anti-colonialism. Yet, we have to ask why some of the critiques offered on Fanon have been so limited within the field of cultural studies, except for the relative excitement generated by Homi Bhabha inventing a one-sided Fanon who has been limited in its ability challenge hegemonic knowledge structures as they relate to emancipatory discourses. Recent works in the field of Fanonism have recognised the invention of a range of Fanons informed by narratives of "end of struggle"¹²³. Thus In

¹²¹ Padmini Mongia, *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory* (London: Arnold, 1996), 2.

¹²² Guy Martins, "Revisiting Fanon Life, Times and Thoughts," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Dec., 2004): 165-171.

¹²³ Nigel Gibson, "Thoughts about doing Fanonism in the 1990's" *College Literature* Vol. 26:2 (1999): 96-117.

conclusion I will briefly review the currently competing images of Fanon as discussed by Bhabha, Gates and Gibson.

Bhabha asserted that “memories of Fanon tend to be mythical. He is either revered as the prophetic spirit of Third World liberation or reviled as an exterminating agent”.¹²⁴ Bhabha explored the question about the relation between Fanon's situated-ness and the production of global theories of alterity. As a result of the emergence of postcolonial theory, and in particular Bhabha's esoteric introduction to *Peau Noir*, Fanonism found itself resituated at the intersections of ambivalence wherein the colonizer and the colonized were regarded as equally complicit in the production of power relations at the colonial frontier. Thus according to Gibson “by attempting to get beyond Manicheanism, Fanon was (*made*) part of an emerging postcolonial debate about subjugation and subjectivity, about discourse and agency, about power and identity, about tradition and modernity, *avant la lettre*”.¹²⁵ While Janmohamed agreed with Bhabha that colonizer-colonised relations were more ambivalent than imagined, he was concerned that Bhabha's radical lacanian/post-structuralist reading of Fanon undervalued his commitment to the material reality of the colonial conditions as experienced by the colonized.

Bhabha argued that Fanon moved too hastily from the ambivalence of identity of the colonized to the radical revolutionary politics of resistance and cultural alienation.¹²⁶ Concerned that Bhabha obscured Fanon's paradigm of colonial relations as marked by implacable enmity, Benita Parry expressed concern that Bhabha's identitarian politics would dissolve the binary opposition of the colonial self/ colonized other if it was not grounded in the dialectic of experience.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Homi Bhabha, “Remembering Fanon” in, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2003), 180.

¹²⁵ Nigel Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, 7.

¹²⁶ Homi Bhabha, “Remembering Fanon” *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, 190.

¹²⁷ Benita Parry, “Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse” *Oxford Literary Review* 9 (1987): 27-58.

Bhabha, like Gayatri Spivak risked producing a Fanon that resides in the realm of representation, characterized by fragmentation, ambivalence and uncertainty, with little recognition of the 'lived experience'. Fanon, himself argued that the "disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of the social and economic realities."¹²⁸ Thus Gibson critiqued Bhabha's reading and argued that "his privileging of the politics of subversion as being more revolutionary than the politics of revolution has resulted in a domesticated Fanon."¹²⁹

On the other end of the postcolonial spectrum we find Francoise Verges, who developed a position introduced by Bulhan, wherein she argued that Fanon's psychoanalysis and politics are inseparable. Concerned about his supposed disillusionment with psychiatric hospitalization, Verges saw Fanon as blindly supporting traditional Algerian social relations. In her pursuit of a gender critique, she proposed a 'Fanon' that uncritically believed in the reconstitution of the "social and cultural organization of Muslim society."¹³⁰ Francoise Verges's invention of a Fanon with a supposedly uncritical attitude to Muslim culture was constructed from a particular conception of memory: "Fanonian theory construes memory as a series of lifeless monuments, a morbid legacy, melancholic nostalgia for a past long gone. There is no place for dreams". Verges argued that Fanon saw the revolution as unencumbered by the spirit of the past and yet he failed to be clear what would serve as the foundation of this new society.¹³¹

Elsewhere, Albert Memmi spoke of a Fanon who not only romanticized the Algerian struggle but one that was deeply traumatized by his dislocation from both France and Martinique. He asserted that "Fanon's private drama is that,

¹²⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 12-12.

¹²⁹ Nigel Gibson, "Thoughts about doing Fanonism in the 1990's", *College Literature*, (Spring 1999): 96-117.

¹³⁰ Francoise Verges, "Chains of Madness, Chains of Colonialism," *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read (Seattle: Bay Press, 1996), 59.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

though henceforth hating France and the French, he will never return to negritude and to the West Indies".¹³² Memmi was particularly concerned that Fanon remained a European interloper, who never even bothered to familiarize himself with local cultural traditions or to learn the language. Memmi wrote:

He grew impatient, and failed to hide his scorn of regional particularism, the tenacity of traditions and customs that distinguished cultural and national aspirations.¹³³

Memmi's Fanon was so utterly dedicated to the idea of a free Third World that he produced a vision of the 'new man' that would not entertain cultural specificities. Finally he argued that this was not a Fanon of strident humanism but rather he held that Fanon's novel man was a reflection of the writer-activist's self-division and dislocation.

Finally, in seeking to rehistoricize Fanon, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. concluded that we can "no longer allow Fanon to remain a kind of icon, or 'screen memory', rehearsing dimly remembered dreams of decolonization."¹³⁴ Thus we need to ensure that Fanon will not be arrested by the specific demands of local discourses and struggles, nor to so remove him from the historical context within which he produced his work, in order that he may fit with contemporary intellectual agendas. Macey remarked that although "Fanon 'lived, fought and died Algerian', ... he was also a product of French culture and colonialism. He was also born a native son of Martinique."¹³⁵ Fanon not only wrote about the zone of occult or value instability, but this was also his site of critique and production. He sought to understand the social relations in the world through an analysis of the relation of local conditions to global discourses. At the end of his review of

¹³² Memmi, "Frozen by Death in the Image of a Third World Prophet," *New York Times Book Review* (14 March 1971), 5 and 20; review of Peter Geismar, *Frantz Fanon* and David Caute's *Fanon*.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁴ Henry Louis Gates Jr. "Critical Fanonism" in *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 266.

¹³⁵ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 30.

the life of Fanon, Hansen highlighted a tribute to Fanon crafted by Aimé Césaire. wrote:

If the word 'commitment' has any meaning, it was with Fanon that it acquired significance. A violent one, they said. And it is true he instituted himself as a theorist of violence, the only arm of the colonized that can be used against colonialist barbarity.

But his violence, and this is not paradoxical, was that of the non-violent. By this I mean the violence of justice, of purity and intransigence. This must be understood about him: his revolt was ethical, and his endeavour generous. He did not simply adhere to the cause. He gave himself to it. Completely and without reserve.¹³⁶

University of Cape Town

¹³⁶ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 131-132; cited By Hansen, in Gibson, *Rethinking Fanon*, 81.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL HORIZONS

This chapter focuses on the key intellectual influences which Fanon inherited and it addresses these in the order of how they emerged within his early writing. The personal and intellectual biographical overview of the previous chapter provided us with a context for understanding the social and political context within which Fanon's ideas developed. The chapter also dealt with the appropriation of Fanon, his ideas and the emergence of the field of Fanon Studies. While Fanon entered the world stage at the height of the decolonization process, which accounts for the tone and rhetoric of his writing, he did however draw on particular intellectual traditions in order to analyse the human condition in general and the 'lived experience of the black' in particular. As such this chapter starts by looking at the influence Césaire and Sartre had on Fanon.

Césaire and Sartre were both immediate predecessors of Fanon and had begun to question the alienation of the Jew and the black respectively. It then considers the idea of the black body, or corporeal schema as central to Fanon's intellectual enterprise as he sought to theorise a conception of the black experience that integrates and then transcends the work of Freud and Hegel.

The second half of this chapter situates Fanon's work in relation to his intellectual contemporaries. By focusing on the continuities and discontinuities between him and the work of Richard Wright and Albert Memmi, this study highlights the ideas that were under debate in intellectual circles at the time. It also situates Fanon's work in the context of global black concerns of the time. A consideration of Fanon in relation to these intellectual contemporaries will set the stage for us understand the particular influence of his Antillean upbringing on his political analysis, which will be developed in the next chapter, and finally will also situate his ambivalent engagement with religion which will be explored in the subsequent chapters.

The post war period was marked by a mixture of despair and optimism and it “was not a particularly hospitable time for prophetic dreaming, least of all for revolutionary dreaming. In the 1940s, a decade afflicted with massive unfreedom and horror galore – Nazism, Stalinism, genocide, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – countless intellectuals succumbed to bitter disillusionment and despair, turning their backs on all dreams for a better world.”¹ Fanon emerged in this context as a definitive critic of colonial/metropolitan relations, addressing congresses in Paris, Ghana and Rome.

In 1956 he was a member of the West Indian delegation along with Édouard Glissant and Aimé Césaire, and addressed the Paris Congress for Black Writers and Artist organized by *Presence Africaine*. In 1958 he was a delegate at the Pan-African Congress in Accra, Ghana and in 1959 he travelled to Rome for the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists. Fanon made a decisive impact on the deliberations at these congresses, where debates about tradition, modernity and religion marked the heated exchanges between some Western-educated and some Africanist delegates.

At the first congress in Paris Fanon spoke on “racism and culture” and Richard Wright, whom he greatly admired, spoke on ‘tradition and industrialization’. The conference was reportedly marked by awkward silences when the topics of the Algerian struggle for independence; the role of the church; or the significance of tradition and culture were raised. In recognition of the differences amongst delegates, Richard Wright digressed during his presentation and responded to Leopold Senghor, the leading advocate of the Africanist cause at the congress, and to the clerics who had spoken of Africans as incurably religious. Commenting on the perceived tensions between secular modernity and nativism, he asserted “there is a schism in our friendship, not political but

¹ Franklin Rosemont “introduction,” in *The Snake Charmer*, Andre Breton, trans. David W. Seaman (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2008), 35.

profoundly human.”²

Fanon occupied a peculiar position in these exchanges, in that he was both a member of the Martinican delegation, and also passionately active within the Algerian struggle for independence. Both countries were places where religious discourses dominated meaning-making, through Islam in North Africa and diasporic religions in the Caribbean. Thus Wright's concern that the Africans' tolerance for the religious undermined black self-recognition, resonated with Fanon's burgeoning secular humanist tendencies. Fanon now found himself at the heart of continental and global debates about the black condition and this undoubtedly had a profound effect on him.

Much of the scholarship that Fanon immersed himself in before and after World War II sought sociological and secular explanations for the role of religion in society. During his studies in Lyons, Fanon attended lectures by Jean Lacroix and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and prior to leaving Paris he met with leading ethnographer and anthropologists like, Alfred Metraux and Michele Leiris, both of whom shared a keen interest in Martinique and the colonial frontier in general. Renate Zahar, in her biographical chapter on Fanon, wrote that apart from his exchanges with scholars from the colonies, and French scholars interested in the colonial contact zone, he would also read Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, Hegel, Marx, Lenin, Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre.³

In *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, Ato Sekyi-Otu, argued that Fanon's theorizing was neither coherent or original and thus suggested that Fanon derived his ideas from different, and sometimes irreconcilable, schools of thought. Sekyi-Otu argued that the dominant interpretation of Fanon was that he proposed a doctrine that sought to understand the essential structure of society and to explain the discrepancies in the human experience of the same meta-context.

² David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, (London: Granta, 2000), 286.

³ Renate Zahar, *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation*, trans. Willfried F. Fueser (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), xi.

According to this view Fanon offered, what Macey referred to as *bricolage*, and what others have considered an incoherent mixture of psycho-analysis, Marxism and existentialism.

Sekyi-Otu argued that “Fanon rewrites three narratives or generic stories – the Hegelian-Sartrean narrative of conflictual recognition, the Freudian narrative of desire, and the Marxist narrative of social relations of production – in terms of a revised master code, that of race.”⁴ There is little doubt in the field of Fanonism that Fanon drew on the dominant theories of his day and that these have undoubtedly influenced his conception of the idea of nation, modernity and religion. Thus reading Fanon's theoretical predecessors and contemporaries makes possible a way of ascertaining the extent to which their ideas informed his conceptions of, or engagements with, religion and how this evolved over time.

Probably the single most important theoretical artery that ran through the work of Fanon, and of those who influenced his work, was Hegel's master-slave dialectic. Although the title of his first book *Black Skin, White Masks* appeared to suggest that the predicament of the colonized was alienation from the self; Fanon was at pains to assert that alienation is not an individual question. He defined his approach as socio-diagnostic – an approach that shifted from the individual to the social realm.⁵ Fanon sought to make sense of the relation between the lived experience of the black, consciousness and the body. For him there was a dialectical correlation between the body and the world,⁶ except that the black body was largely defined through the epidermalization of the ‘colonial gaze’ – meaning that the gaze was never more than skin-deep, denoting the fact that, for black people, otherness was always first associated with the black skin. Thus Fanon came to appreciate that the racial gaze operated in a Manichean frame, a frame that ultimately defined social relations

⁴ Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 19.

⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles lam Markmann (London: Pluto, 1986), 13.

⁶*Ibid.*, 111.

between the colonizer and the colonized, the metropolitan and the Other, and between the master and the slave.

Fanon was particularly drawn to Hegel's master-slave dialectic because of its privileging of recognition – the coming to self-awareness through encountering one's other - since it offered the possibility for transcending the colonial Manicheanism. Fanon, recognizing the Hegelian dialectic in their work, drew on conceptions of phenomenology developed by Césaire, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. He used these to interrogate contemporary black alienation and malaise. Although, neither the work of Sartre or Merleau-Ponty dealt decisively with race or anti-racism, they both offered Fanon a theoretical foundation upon which to establish his analysis. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty situated their work in the Hegelian tradition of phenomenology, which held that meaning and coherence existed in the 'construction' of dualities such as the concrete and the object, the part and the whole, and for our purposes, the master and the slave.⁷ Fanon sought to draw on the idea that 'the master' was a consciousness that emerged and assumed meaning only in relation to the 'slave'. In this sense it was wholly dependent insofar as it existed only in relation to another and it would become redundant without its other.

For Hegel, history is a progression from unconscious alienation to self-actualization culminating in rational, constitutional citizenship. He argued that social relations are defined in terms of the dialectic, and he posited it as a series of encounters between two self-conscious beings who seek recognition from one another.⁸ Hegel argued that if nobody acknowledged you, you would cease to exist and that you needed that recognition to validate your existence. Likewise, your existence validates the meaning and the reality of the Other in a sort of mirrored image projected from one towards another. But this dependence leaves the symmetry of the mutual recognition unstable and Hegel

⁷ Georg Hegel *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 111-112.

⁸ Michael R Michau, "Fanon and the Radical Phenomenology of Responsibility," Department of Philosophy Graduate Colloquium, Purdue University (February, 2003), 3.

suggested that to resolve the instability the 'master and slave' engage in a life-and-death match. However this struggle was simply for one to gain mastery over the other.⁹ Killing or annihilating of the other would not be an option in this match because the 'removal' of the other, also meant the removal of the possibility of recognition, and as such validation of your existence, meaning and consciousness. Thus the struggle between the two entities would continue until one established dominance over the other and demanded recognition. The slave then, like a mirror reflected the master, and the master acquired recognition from the slave.

More recently scholars have been particularly interested in the master's dependence on the slave for recognition. This dependence rendered him or her vulnerable and dependent, and thus opened the possibility of denial and revolt on the part of the slave.¹⁰

Firstly, Fanon detected these tensions and possibility in his reading of Hegel. He challenged Hegel's notion that there existed mutual recognition between master and slave by arguing that in the colonial context, due to its history of disparity in military and economic power, the colonial master did not seek recognition from the slave. For Fanon, the colonial master laughed at the slave. He insisted that what the colonial master wanted from the slave was not recognition but labour.¹¹ Thus the colonial master was less dependent on the slave than the Hegelian master. Although Fanon did extrapolate the notion of mutual dependence, he suggested that as a result of the colonial condition - a failure to pursue the possibility of revolt - the colonial slave, unlike his Hegelian counterpart, did not turn towards the object (life) but rather sought to become like the master.

⁹ Lou Turner, "On the Difference between the Hegelian and Fanonian Dialectic of Lordship and Bondage," in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, eds. Lewis Gordon, et al. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 145-147.

¹⁰ Nigel Gibson, *Fanon: Postcolonial Imagination* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 37-41.

¹¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 220 n.8.

the black man wants to be like the white man. For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. Long ago the black man admitted the unarguable superiority of the white man, and all his efforts are aimed at achieving a white existence.¹²

The second feature of Fanon's divergence from the Hegelian reading of consciousness rested in Fanon's identification of the self in relation to both consciousness and the body. Considering the history of colonialism and slavery, wherein the enslaved body becomes a commodity, Fanon insisted not only on a different reading of the master-slave dialectic but he also critiqued the very basis of 'existentialist' knowledge regimes by arguing that consciousness and the body were inseparable. To develop his notion that the enslaved body was a site of struggle, and the site upon which histories of violence is inscribed and re-inscribed, Fanon turned to the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.¹³

Fanon drew on Merleau-Ponty's notion that the body was constructed in the midst of a spatial and temporal world but added that for the black body it was an ambivalent and uncertain existence. Merleau-Ponty, in his *Phenomenology of Perception* argued that being in the world or corporeal schema was a resume of the bodily experience and a way of expressing that the body is in the world.¹⁴

Fanon argued that "in the white world the man of colour encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is a solely negative activity... the body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty."¹⁵ Through this re-reading, and use of phenomenology Fanon began to flesh out his argument which in *Black Skin, White Masks* culminated in the chapter entitled "the lived experience of the black". This chapter marked the convergence of a number of key themes alluded to in earlier sections of *Black Skin, White Masks*. Here Fanon sought to illustrate the predicament of the

¹² Ibid, 228.

¹³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1996), 388. Original work published 1945

¹⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 116.

¹⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 111-112.

colonized, both in the metropolitan centre, the colonial frontier and the many routes in between. The “lived experience of the black” was dense with details and represented the rudiments of Fanon’s ethic and aesthetic of transformation (of self and society).

Drawing on the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, Fanon recognised that the colonized, as an extension of both consciousness and material conditions existed for the metropolitan other, in the same way as the Hegelian slave existed to give meaning to the master. Fanon captured what Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), a former slave turned author and abolitionist in nineteenth century America, articulated in his second autobiography *My Bondage, My Freedom* when he wrote that he “was a slave, born a slave... born for another’s benefit.”¹⁶ While Douglass presumably limited the recognition of his status to that of being a commodity in a culture of production, Fanon went on to argue that the consciousness and identity of the master was contingent upon the recognition of the slave or colonial other.

Fanon suggested that in the colonial context, marked by denial and erasure, the black subject could not exist independently but was always defined in relation to the white colonizer. Fanon’s chapter, “the lived experience of the black” opened with the exclamation of a young French child travelling on a Parisian tram. When looking at a black person the child exclaimed: “Look, a Negro!” Fanon immediately became acutely aware of a history of denial, definition and erasure. He went on to assert that it was “the white, who has woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes and stories”.¹⁷ He became aware of the ways in which, as a person of colour, he was trapped by idea of the black Other conjured up in the European imagination and one can sense him groaning

¹⁶ Frederick Douglas, *My Bondage, My Freedom* (Chicago: Ebony Classics-Johnson Publishing Co., 1970), 45.

¹⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 111.

under the weight of that history of representation when he wrote that through “his movements, attitudes and gaze of the other fixes me”.¹⁸

One immediately becomes aware of the frustration of the author as he finds himself fixed and arrested by the limits of another’s imagination and immediately the text suggests a movement towards revolt: “I lost my temper”... “I exploded” and Fanon started his critical reflection with the assertion that “ontology is unrealizable in a colonized (and civilized) society”.¹⁹ He proceeded to argue that in order to break free from the representation that fixed black subjects in their bodies they “have to confront the white gaze”.²⁰

Fanon believed that in the colonial context Merleau-Ponty’s conception of the corporeal schema is undermined and negated by the white gaze, in that the ‘gaze’ reduced all conceptions of the colonized body to the epidermal. For Fanon, Merleau-Ponty privileged freedom and agency of the subject (much like in Hegel’s master-slave dialectic) at the expense of historical experience. He argued that Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology neglected the historical contexts that produce difference, which in the colonial context was racial. Fanon suggested that Merleau-Ponty’s corporeal schema needed to be situated in a historic-racial schema because, in his view, bodily and spatial relations cannot be read or analysed coherently outside the history of racial representation, and discrimination. He remarked at the end of *Black Skin, Whites Masks* that “there are times when the black man is locked into his body”²¹ and asserted that when the person acquires consciousness of himself *and of his body* “the body is no longer a cause of structure of consciousness, it has become an object of consciousness”.²²

¹⁸ Ibid., 109.

¹⁹ Ibid., 109.

²⁰ Ibid., 110.

²¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 225.

²² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 227.

In his discussion of the divergence in phenomenology between Fanon and Merleau-Ponty, Jeremy Weate suggested that Fanon introduced an important slippage from the 'historico-racial' to the 'racial-epidermal'²³ and that as such Fanon demonstrated that "the epidermal marks the stage where historical construction and contingency is effaced and replaced with the facticity of flesh. [and] the colour of skin now appears to be intrinsically significant."²⁴ Fanon inherited from Merleau-Ponty and Hegel the irreducible importance of the gaze and the (black) body but he specifically sought to theorise the relations between these two elements in the colonial context. He concluded that instead of finding the source of liberation in his work, the colonized now turned towards the master and rejected the conditions of his alienation.²⁵ It is quite clear that while Merleau-Ponty's and Hegel's work had a profound influence on Fanon's understanding of the significance of the black body, he also expanded their phenomenologies so as to make possible a liberative, new beginning for the black subject.

Though Fanon did not explicitly recognize this, his ideas about the body reflected the interest of an intellectual community that sought to explain the world in terms of the body, in production, performance and resistance. Early French ethnographers observed pre-modern societies through the conduct or performance of the body. These observations of supposedly "primitive" traditions influenced both intellectual and artistic traditions, such as reflected in the work of Durkheim and Picasso to name two. Durkheim's studies on the origin of religion and the structure of society, drew on the social practices of the Australian aboriginal peoples to explain his theory that religious ritual functions so as to produce social solidarity. He drew particularly on the fact that ritual produced euphoric and high emotional states to counter-balance social frustrations. He argued that these were facilitated through song, and dance. His ideas about the elementary forms of religion would influence the next generation of anthropologists such as Leiris, Levi-Strauss and Metraux, all of who sought to

²³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 112.

²⁴ Jeremy Weate, "Fanon, Merleau-Ponty and the Difference of Phenomenology" in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 174.

²⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 221.

engage with “primitive” societies in Africa and the Antilles. These scholars were particularly drawn to the body in performance of voodoo or other spiritist traditions that would produce a kind of ritual ecstasy, not unlike the Durkheim aboriginals. Leiris wrote about his observation in the Antilles:

on a purely aesthetic level one observes in voodoo ceremonial the co-existence of unmistakably Africa-type dances with a system of circling movement of welcome... the exact origin of these movement remain insoluble; one must however stress in the ceremonies and simple dances associated with the voodoo cults how gripping the balletic character of the ritual is.²⁶

Anthony Pinn, reflecting on religion in the African-America religious traditions argued that the religious person “lives through the body not in spite of the body,”²⁷ while Christopher Balme suggested that Caribbean religions rest on a culture of theatricality, wherein the body becomes central in ritual life.²⁸ Finally, Penelope Ingram, in *The Signifying Body* argued that “In demonstrating that race is constituted in a visual field, Fanon exposed the potential for its subversion. He demonstrates the possibility of resignification at the visual level: how the racialized gaze, which refuses reciprocal recognition, can be returned, interpreted, reversed, and resignified. If the body is a field of signification that is interpreted visually, Fanon leads us to a new language, a resignification of the body through the subversion of the look.”²⁹

NEGRITUDE: CÉSAIRE, SARTRE AND FANON IN CONVERSATION

The period between the first and second world wars, as well as the period immediately after World War II saw a great deal of transnational movement of hitherto previously restricted black artists and intellectuals. The periods after

²⁶ Michel Leiris, ‘Martinique, Guadeloupe, Haiti’ *Le Temps modernes*, 5/52 (1950): 1345.

²⁷ Anthony Pinn, “Black Theology, Black Bodies and Pedagogy” *Crosscurrents*, Vol.50, Issue 1-2 (Spring/ Summer 2000): 196-202.

²⁸ Christopher Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 93-95.

²⁹ Penelope Ingram, *The Signifying Body* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), xiii.

World War II was also characterized by an exchange of ideas between scholars in various fields about the nation state and human freedom. Those from former French colonies enjoyed particular mobility in metropolitan France and Paris became the hub of Pan-Africanism, bringing together black Americans and francophone blacks, such as René Maran, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon Damas. The exchange of ideas among black intellectuals produced a nationalism of race that came to be known as 'negritude'. This first wave of black thinkers from the colonial periphery was profoundly influenced by two key movements of the period: the avant-garde aesthetic of the surrealists and the radical politics of the French Communist Party.

Most notable of these black intellectuals were Damas, Césaire and Senghor who together founded *L'Etudiant noir*, the periodical in which the concept of negritude is believed to have originated. All three would go on to become leading social and political figures in their respective home countries, yet each acknowledged their indebtedness to surrealism in the development of the conception of negritude. Césaire, as candidate for the communist party, would become deputy for Martinique in the French National Assembly in 1945. The Paris-based American surrealist, Andre Breton recognized that Césaire had transcended the limits of surrealism and ultimately used it to express the political aspirations of his people. As poet and later as Senegalese representative in the French national Assembly, who would become the first president of an independent Senegal, Senghor recognized in his poetry and politics his indebtedness to surrealism.³⁰ Damas – who would become a representative for French Guiana to the French national assembly - was the first of the three to publish his politically explicit work, *Pigments*. His poetry, although influenced by the surrealist tradition, assumed a more staccato and direct character. Together the three founded the negritude movement, which would broadly be described

³⁰ Leopold Sédar Senghor, "Speech and Image: An African Tradition of the Surreal" in *Symposium of the Whole: A Range of Discourse Toward An Ethnopoetics*, eds. Jerome Rothenberg and Diane Rothenberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 120; see also Mary Ann Caws, *Surrealist Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002)

as a literary and ideological movement that represented Francophone colonial concerns.

The concept of Negritude, the first non-European ideological movement Fanon encountered in the person and teaching of Aimé Césaire, represented a historic development for African and black diasporic identity and culture. It was a movement that sought the revalorization of Africa on the part of New World blacks, affirming an overwhelming pride in black heritage and culture. Like forerunners, Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois, this embryonic francophone movement sought to erase the stigma attached to the black world through their intellectual and political efforts on behalf of the people of Africa and the African diaspora. Although Aimé Césaire, in collaboration with Leopold Sedar Senghor, was accredited with coining the term 'negritude', it was widely agreed that the emergence of the movement was the culmination of decades of increasing self-recognition, and of resistance to racist representation. Negritude took the stigmatized term, "negrè" (nigger) and turned it into a point of pride.

As the movement grew in its struggle against colonial racism, on the one hand, and in its affirmation of black identity on the other, negritude developed two competing fields of reasoning and practice. Nigel Gibson argued that at the outset "negritude spoke of alienation and not exploitation; it spoke to the elite and not to the masses; to the literate and not to the illiterate. And though it represented itself as universal, it was, by and large, a movement which constituted a response by a section of the Black *evolues* in French society to their sense of alienation."³¹ It is in this sense that negritude was understood as an affirmation of a negation - a negation of a historical movement that threatened to assimilate and eradicate the difference of the black person.

Césaire saw negritude in terms of the unity of black existence, as a historical phenomenon that was shaped by the events of the African slave trade and

³¹ Nigel Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, 62.

settlement in the new world over the next few centuries. Developing a distinct conception of negritude from Césaire, Senghor argued for an unchanging core or essence to black existence. He saw negritude as a movement for the recovery and celebration of distinctly black ways of being in the world. Some scholars have argued that, notwithstanding these differences between the founding fathers of negritude, Senghor's conception served to reverse the system of values that had informed Western perception of blacks since the earliest voyages of discovery to Africa; while Césaire's approach continued to offer a model for the ongoing enterprise of black liberation in all its facets.

First used by Césaire in "*Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*" (Notebook of a Return to My Native Land), *negritude* refers to a collective identity of the African diaspora born of a common historico-cultural experience of slavery and alienation. To Césaire, "Negritude was essentially a revolt against the oppression of the black race by the white race, fused with the desire to restore human dignity to the black man who had borne four centuries of servitude."³² Sartre, writing a critical appraisal of negritude, entitled *Orphee noir* which served as an introduction to Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*, argued that it was "neither a state nor a definite ensemble of vices and virtues or of moral and intellectual qualities, but rather a certain affective attitude towards the world."³³ As the term and movement gained currency in postwar France, it also became an increasingly contested term in literary and cultural circles that sought to emphasize the possible negation of that subjugation.

That Senghor felt compelled to assert that "negritude ...is not a racism, not even an anti-racist racism"³⁴ reflected the extent to which the term had become the focus for ideological disputes among the black intelligentsia during the period of

³² Janis L. Pallister, *Aimé Césaire* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 26.

³³ Jean Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Patrick Williams and Linda Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 129.

³⁴ Leopold Senghor, "Negritude and Modernity or Negritude as a Humanism for the Twentieth Century" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Patrick Williams and Linda Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 145.

decolonization. The negritude debate mirrored the diverse fields of interest as the concept began to be expanded, contracted and even contradicted as writers such as Leopold Sedar Senghor, Jean Paul Sartre and later Frantz Fanon and the Anglophone Wole Soyinka each weighed in with their own reformulations and critiques of Césaire's concept.

Sartre regarded negritude as a racist movement which he felt was necessary at a particular point in history, but argued that it represented a 'weak stage of a dialectical progression' which culminated in 'the synthesis or the realization of the human in a raceless society'. For Sartre it was at this moment of solidarity that the colonized subject's oppression at the hands of the colonial regime rejoins the fight against exploitation in general.³⁵ Sartre argued that: "this anti-racist racism is the only road that will lead to the abolition of racial difference"³⁶ and he concluded that in the end the tragedy of negritude was that it was "not sufficient in itself."³⁷

It is to this particular Sartrean critique of negritude as necessarily dedicated to its own destruction that Fanon responded to in *Black Skin, White Masks* when he lamented that Sartre "has destroyed Black enthusiasm."³⁸ Elsewhere in his work Fanon, though critical of negritude, sought to correct a narrow reading of the concept by repeatedly arguing for the recovery of the black self. For him the black person was constantly confronted with the idea that "his body is black, his language is black, his soul must be black too".³⁹ For Fanon, like Césaire, "contact with the white man was more likely to happen at a price of psychological violence than on the basis of mutual recognition."⁴⁰ Thus, while Senghor was more concerned with negritude as the re-discovery and celebration of a glorious

³⁵ James Penney, "Passing into the Universal: Fanon, Sartre, and the Colonial Dialectic" *Paragraph* 27:3 (2004): 49-67.

³⁶ Jean Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, 118.

³⁷ Nigel Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, 73.

³⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 135.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁴⁰ Martial K. Frindethie, *Black Renaissance in Francophone African and Caribbean Literatures* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2008), 60.

African past that might be reconciled with western reason, Césaire conceived of negritude as the invention of a new world. Gibson suggested that for Césaire, negritude was open to all the world and that he defined it not simply in terms of representations of empires, land, ethnicity or biology but by the collective memory of suffering.⁴¹

The historical origins of negritude, though coined in the 1930s, can be traced to the various forms of cultural expression in the French Caribbean. These were forms of expression that had their roots in the African continent, and were practices that were transformed by the experience of slavery “to produce a certain common quality to the thoughts and the conduct of negroes”⁴². It represented the culmination of various traditions, movements and scholarly works that were concerned with the expression of an ideologically and culturally inflected black identity. Some of those that prefigured the negritude movement include such traditions as the North American spirituals first championed in *The Souls of Black Folk*, by W. E. B. Du Bois, as well as a variety of artistic and religious practices that served as refuges for Afro-Caribbean pride and African culture. This proto-Negritude engaged in subversive cultural, religious, and aesthetic practices as well as overt acts of rebellion that included feigned laziness, ignorance or incompetence, theft, poisoning of animals and burning of buildings, escape into marooned communities, and organized revolts.

The social dynamics of a Caribbean society created through the institution of slavery and the racialized culture of the colonies, a powerful ideological validation of, and identification with a centralized metropolitan French culture. Frantz Fanon in *Peau noire* and Édouard Glissant in *Le Discours Antillais* (Caribbean Discourse) discussed this identification with the French language as the reason for longevity of the French colonial project.

⁴¹ Nigel Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, 67.

⁴² Jean Paul Sartre, “Black Orpheus” in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, 119.

The French *Code Noir* of 1685 had forbidden blacks to read or write, and it remained in effect until 1848 as the institutionalization of the French imperial ideology. Coupled with the dominance of the *beke*, this ideology produced a culture of political, economic and social dependence characterized by the gaze nostalgically turned towards metropolitan France - the imaginary ideal. This overwhelming cultural identification highlighted the radical nature of Césaire's revalorization of African, rather than French, culture – a sentiment which Fanon gave explicit recognition to in his essay, "West Indians and Africans".⁴³ Sartre referred to Césaire's poetry as the 'embodiment of negativity' especially because he saw how Césaire utilized surrealism, turning it against the European to advance his particular political project. Andre Breton had only the highest praise for the 1955 *Presence Africaine* edition of Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, calling it:

a definitive work in which the argumentation is as rich and as solid as the expression is ardent and beautiful. The circulation of *Discourse on Colonialism* constitutes today's spiritual weapon par excellence.⁴⁴

The German philosopher Hegel had a deep and enduring influence on Césaire and subsequent participants in the Negritude debate such as Frantz Fanon, Richard Wright, and Jean-Paul Sartre. However Hegel notoriously exempted blacks from the processes of historical development in his *Philosophy of History*, stating that the black "condition is capable of no development of culture, and as we see them at this day, such they have always been."⁴⁵ This philosophical tradition advanced a belief in the inferiority of blacks based upon supposed physical and intellectual traits. Furthermore, it presupposed the existence of discrete "races". In response various writers sought to rescue the image of Africa for blacks of the diaspora. Young diaspora writers sought the revalorization of

⁴³ Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, trans. Haakom Chevalier (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), 21-22.

⁴⁴ Andre Breton, "Speech to the meeting 'For the Defense of Freedom,'" in *What is Surrealism?*, ed. Franklin Rosemont (New York: Pathfinder Press, 2000), 382-383.

⁴⁵ Georg Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, trans. John Sibree (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 98.

African history after Hegel's blanket condemnation, and then went on to develop an early form of Pan-Africanism that prefigured the championing of identity and culture that found expression in Senghor and Césaire's Negritude.

World War I had brought blacks from the French Caribbean and African colonies to Europe which meant that the 1919 Pan-African Congress, although cautious in its condemnation of colonialism, marked the beginnings of a truly international solidarity among members of the African diaspora. It was in this context that Sartre's defense of Césaire was most decisive when he wrote about negritude "as being against Europe and colonization. What Césaire destroys is not *all* cultures but rather white culture; what he brings to light is not a desire for *everything* but rather the revolutionary aspiration of the oppressed negro; ...a certain specific, concrete form of humanity."⁴⁶ This emerging sentiment found increasing support among the black intelligentsia. For example Rene Maran and the Nardal sisters, editing *La Dépêche Africaine* saw their mission as facilitating a "juncture between Negroes of the entire world" through the recovery of black aesthetic and intellectual production. As they sought to articulate their cultural and political aspirations, these francophone scholars combined discourses of Surrealism, Hegelian Marxism, and Freudianism in their vehement condemnation of French colonialism, racism, and capitalist exploitation.

The emergence of the Paris-based negritude movement was prefigured, significantly by the Harlem Renaissance and the work of Marcus Garvey whose revalorization of African culture was similar to both Césaire's and Senghor's subsequent development of Negritude. "Negroes," Garvey implored, "teach your children that they are direct descendants of the greatest and proudest race who ever peopled the earth."⁴⁷ Also buoyancy and optimism among certain European intellectuals was central to the increasing popularity of Negritude, especially through the interest in African art and culture from the likes of Pablo

⁴⁶ Jean Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, 127.

⁴⁷ Amy Jacques Garvey, ed. *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Routledge, 1967), 82.

Picasso, the writers Jean Cocteau and Blaise Cendrars. Nonetheless, these exchanges created a climate of receptivity in which intellectuals such as Andre Breton and Sartre would quickly recognize the importance of Negritude in the 1940s.

As an earlier resource, Leo Frobenius's *History of African Civilization* provided Césaire and Senghor with a conception of history in which a redundant Europe might be superceded by more vital African diasporic cultures. The extent of this influence is evidenced by Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* wherein he cited Frobenius to re-assert that "the idea of the barbaric Negro is a European invention".⁴⁸ One decisive outcome of the Hegelian reading of the relation between colonizer and the colonized set Césaire, Sartre and Fanon on a very particular trajectory for framing the politics of black self-recognition. That in seeking to distill the black soul, or recover it from alienation, these writers found that blacks were definitionally arrested in relation to the colonizer or the white master. They drew on Hegel's master-slave dialectic to reverse the colonial gaze, and thus activate a process of self-recognition that is consistent with the values of this embryonic negritude movement. This inversion of the racist gaze exposed the white European identity as ambivalent and vulnerable insofar as it was an identity constructed through the relations of master to the slave and colonizer to the colonized. Thus the self-fashioning of the colonized emerged as a tremendous threat to a European self-conception which was born out of practices of slavery and colonization.

When Aimé Césaire returned to Martinique in 1939, the term "Negritude" was known and used only by the small circle of black intellectuals who had surrounded Césaire in Paris, in particular Senghor and Leon-Gantron Damas. Unlike Césaire's earlier historicizing use of the term Negritude, articles such as "What Does Africa Mean to Us?" argued for a biologically based notion of black identity inherited from Frobenius, which relied on biology to account for black

⁴⁸ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 32.

identity.⁴⁹ James Arnold has argued that both Césaire's and Senghor's initial uncritical reliance upon a sanguinary ideology of African "blood" resonates disturbingly with Fascist doctrine of the era. Nick Nesbitt observed that later *Tropiques*, the Martinican literary review founded by Césaire, his wife Suzanne and their friend, René Menil, drew on a heterogeneous field of influences, invoking those elements of a European aesthetic heritage such as surrealism, which could be appropriated as a tool in refashioning black culture.

This period was marked by the contributions of Leopold Senghor with his *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie Nègre et malgache*, Césaire in *Cahier*, Damas in *Pigments*, and a number of black Francophone poets and writers whose work reflected upon the vicissitudes of black existence. These texts explored the social relations and psyches damaged by colonialism, the contradictions of a dual African and European heritage, and finally articulated the various forms of alienation encountered by colonized African and Antillean subjects.

Jean-Paul Sartre's *Black Orpheus*, an introduction to Senghor's anthology, was largely responsible for situating the concept of Negritude at the center of the postwar Francophone debate about black identity. As one of the leading postwar Francophone intellectuals, Sartre's public and intellectual prestige resulted in the Negritude debate being framed around his articulation of the concept. Gibson suggested that Sartre's *Black Orpheus* is "one of the most important attempts to understand negritude as an aesthetic and political movement."⁵⁰ Sartre's text developed the Hegelian category of negativity in relation to black consciousness and it drew significantly on Hegel's master/slave dialectic. Sartre endorsed the notion of a racial essence wherein "the black soul is an Africa from which the black ['Nègre'] is exiled amidst the cold buildings of white culture and technology" thus grounding this conception within the undeniable visibility of skin color:

⁴⁹ Denean Sharpley-Whiting, 'Tropiques: Revue culturelle: The Remedy for the Martinican Cultural Void' in *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy*, eds. Robert Bernasconi and Sybol Cook (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 119.

⁵⁰ Nigel Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, 71.

A Jew, a white among whites, can deny that he is a Jew, declaring himself a man among men. The black cannot deny that he is black nor claim for himself an abstract, colorless humanity: he is black. Thus he is driven to authenticity: insulted, enslaved, he raises himself up. He picks up the word "black" ("Negre") that they had thrown at him like a stone, he asserts his blackness, facing the white man, with pride.⁵¹

But, for Fanon, the very creation of a black soul was a white construction. He had deep anxieties about Sartre speaking on behalf of the black subject and he was frustrated by the fact that it was his "intellectual commitment to negritude, not his existential commitment, that Sartre destroyed"⁵² He wrote: "when I tried, on the level of ideas and intellectual activity, to proclaim my negritude" that his endeavour was undermined by Sartre's critique.⁵³ Fanon critiqued Senghor's famous statement "Emotion is black as Reason is Hellenic," indicting Césaire and Senghor's glorification of the irrational as a "regressive process" but he also violently refused Sartre's vision of an instrumentalized black identity to be dissolved in the Sartrean ideal of a "raceless society," and he asserted: "I am not a potentiality for something. I am fully that which I am."⁵⁴

For Fanon, Sartre's relationship with negritude was inevitably ambivalent because Sartre did not grasp that "the negro suffers in his body differently than the white".⁵⁵ Sartre's race was an issue for Fanon and thus Bernasconi argued that Sartre had no right to privilege the Marxist voices over others, that it was not his place to choose Césaire over Senghor. He concluded that for Fanon:

Sartre as a white is not only the other... this is because White is not only the other, but also the master, whether real or imaginary. (Thus) Sartre's proclamation about meaning of negritude keep intact the

⁵¹ Jean Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, 118.

⁵² Robert Bernasconi, "The European knows and does not know: Fanon's response to Sartre" in *Frantz Fanon's Black Skin White Masks* ed. Max Silverman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 106.

⁵³ Frantz Fanon *Black Skin White Masks*, 132-135.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

structure that serves to produce the problem, when he a white man, asks blacks to unilaterally renounce the pride of their colour.⁵⁶

Césaire suggested that, like the invented Jew of Sartre's *Anti-Semite and the Jew*, the idea of the savage 'black' too was a product of European representations.⁵⁷ It was clear that for Césaire this process or act of self-fashioning, was not simply reducible to a Sartrean raceless, Marxist society. Césaire promoted an idea of future society that allowed for a kind of racial and cultural diversity that Sartre sought to gloss over. Sartre critiqued negritude's privileging of the black experience as a essentially a racist anti-racism. Thus Césaire argued that:

The problem is not to make a utopian and sterile attempt to repeat the past, but to go beyond. It is not a dead society that we want to revive. We leave that to those who go in for exoticism. Nor is it the present colonial society that we wish to prolong, the most putrid carrion that ever rotted under the sun. It is a new society that we must create, with the help of all our brother slaves, a society rich with all the productive power of modern times, warm with all the fraternity of the olden days.⁵⁸

During the postwar period, the concept of Negritude developed along two opposing lines of interpretation. By the time of the Colloquium on Negritude in 1971, Negritude had itself become a highly contested term, whose interpretation had rigidified into a largely ideological concept. Although at the outset both Senghor and Césaire defined negritude in biological terms, Césaire later developed the notion of negritude as a cultural, historically developing process. James Penney argued that for Sartre the poetry of negritude not only represented the self-fashion of the black person but also in positing Europe as the object of their cultural view.⁵⁹ In his *Black Orpheus* Sartre argued that for "in Césaire the great surrealist tradition is realized, it takes on its definitive meaning

⁵⁶ Robert Bernasconi, "The European knows and does not know: Fanon's response to Sartre" in *Frantz Fanon's Black Skin White Masks* ed. Max Silverman, 108.

⁵⁷ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 32.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁹ James Penney, "Passing into the Universal: Fanon, Sartre, and the Colonial Dialectic" *Paragraph* 27:3 (2004):49-67.

and is destroyed: surrealism – that European poetic movement – is taken from the Europeans by a black man who turns it against them and gives it a rigorously defined function”⁶⁰ Sartre goes on to suggest that “negritude is the Negro-being-in-the-world” before he goes on to cite Césaire’s *Cahier* on negritude:

My negritude is not a stone with its deafness flung out against the
clamor of the day
My negritude is not a dead speck of water
on the dead eye of the earth
my negritude is neither a tower or a cathedral
it plunges into the red flesh of the ground
it plunges into the ardent flesh of the sky
it perforates the opaque pressure of its righteous patience⁶¹

Thomas Hale suggested that in *Cahier*, Césaire juxtaposed Europe with the Caribbean, and the individual with the collective – and that through this action he provoked a reaction that generated a new vision. In recognition of this possibility of resistance Maerhofer spoke of Césaire’s poetry as characterized by his “revolt against western thought”⁶² and Frindethie similarly argued that Césaire’s negritude “springs from an activism against the white’s complex of superiority, which he witnessed firsthand in Martinique.”⁶³ It is this coupling of the individual with the collective, of the colonial periphery with the imperial centre that appealed to Fanon as he constructed his theory about the inauguration of the new man.

Leopold Senghor’s notion of Negritude focused on the supposedly “African” characteristics of emotion, intuition, and artistic creativity as opposed to a Western, or “Hellenic,” rationality. Senghor elaborated his conception of Negritude without engaging the scientific invalidation of races. He constructed a typology of an “eternal . . . black soul” based upon the categories of “emotion,”

⁶⁰ Jean Paul Sartre, “Black Orpheus” in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, 128.

⁶¹ Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to a Native Land*, trans. Clayton Eshleman, ed. Annette Smith (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 35.

⁶² John Maerhofer, “Aimé Césaire and the Crisis of Aesthetic and Political Vanguardism” (unpublished manuscript, 2006), 6.

⁶³ Martial K. Frindethie, *Black Renaissance in Francophone African and Caribbean Literatures* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2008), 60.

"rhythmic attitude," and "humor." Though this conception of negritude represented an early formulation, Senghor continued to defend and develop the idea of an 'African personality' in his essay, "Negritude as a Humanism of the Twentieth Century". He claimed that since it had been accepted as a given over 60 years of ethnological and sociological investigation, the 'African personality' was a legitimate and objective category of analysis.

One can imagine that Richard Wright and Fanon would have cringed at Senghor's uttering such a statement at the *Presence africaine* conference in Paris. In fact observers recall tense exchanges and antagonism between Senghor and Wright – described by Albert Gerard as a "heated polemic"⁶⁴ – on the issues on rationality and the "negro" personality, as well as the project concerned with the spiritualist recovery of a glorious African past.⁶⁵ What frustrated Wright was the fact that Senghor's idea of the spiritual essence of the black subject was arrested by the analytical framework inherited from Frobenius. Frobenius's idea that languages, cultures and religions could be organized into distinct cultural circles, each with its own spiritual essence or soul, found explicit expression in Senghor's promotion of indigeneity.

Elsewhere, working in the field of political theory, Jason Myers pointed out the problem with such tautological reasoning when he critiqued the widespread endorsement of the legitimacy of traditional institutions in Africa as basis of the institution being granted authority. He argued that traditional institutions were regarded as legitimate political authorities by virtue of their cultural status and he suggested that; "the fact that it 'plays a role', is taken as evidence of its legitimacy. Thus, the external signs of authority – command and compliance – are offered as proof of its internal workings – common experience and agreement."⁶⁶ Benita Parry argued that the rhetoric of intact indigenous

⁶⁴ Albert S. Gerard, *European Language Writing in sub-Saharan Africa* (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986), 336.

⁶⁵ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 286.

⁶⁶ Jason Myers, "The Spontaneous Ideology in Post-Apartheid South Africa" *Politikon* (1999): 33-54.

traditions, an African past and the idea of an African personality were all European inventions.⁶⁷

Thus, for our purposes, we will define Senghor's negritude as a study of the being of blacks in the world, a fundamentally ahistorical consideration of the continuities and discontinuities of "blackness" in African diasporic societies. For Senghor this ontological definition of negritude had become the accepted one, which he defined as "the ensemble of characteristics, of manners of thinking, of feeling, proper to the black race; belonging to the black race."⁶⁸ Senghor's negritude reversed the stigmatization of blacks derived from the 19th-century racialism that permeated art, literature and science in which the notion "primitive mentality," was uncritically adopted. While Césaire's brand of negritude was focused on a more radical humanist transformation of the world, Senghor was more drawn to the encounter or contact of African culture, arts and religion with western modernity. While his legacy included a decisive political contribution in his native Senegal, his more enduring legacy came from his desire to see Africans recover and celebrate their philosophies and their religions, their customs and their institutions, their literature and their art.⁶⁹

Césaire, on the other hand situated his negritude in the context of the protracted history of slavery that characterized the triangular trade of European exploitation in African and Caribbean colonies over several centuries. Césaire activated in *Cahier*, a journey that was a movement back in time, linking the black diaspora with Africa, but it was also a movement against the dominating discourse of European racist oppression. In *Cahier* the colonized black subject,

⁶⁷ Benita Parry "Resistance Theory: theorizing resistance" in *Colonial Discourse/ Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 177.

⁶⁸ Nick Nesbitt, cites Senghor's revision of an earlier definition of negritude, see <http://www.geocities.com/africanwriters/origins.html>. see also "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994)

⁶⁹ Leopold Senghor, "Negritude: A Humanism of the twentieth Century" in *I Am because We Are: Readings in Black Philosophy*, eds. Fred L Hord and Jonathan Scott Lee (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 45.

having rejected European rationalism, returned to the Caribbean and there affirmed the sacred link back to Africa as the source of black self-recognition. As such, for Césaire, negritude represented not simply an embracing of the collective consciousness of the colonized, but it also marked a decisive turning away from Europe, and the black desire for European recognition. This sentiment was echoed by Sartre in his "Introduction" to Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* where he argued that were the colonizer to disappear so would colonization, a system which he described as a form in motion "that will manufacture its own destruction."⁷⁰

Although mirrored by parallel processes occurring in North America, Césaire's re-vindication of the term "nègre" was said to have occurred in a specific historical and linguistic environment. In metropolitan France 'nègre' and 'noir' were used interchangeably. The traditional French Caribbean identification with metropolitan French culture had little influence on the usage of the term by black Antilleans, who attributed distinct meanings to these terms. While the terms *noir* denoted a general reference to blackness, the term *nègre*, while referring to being a black person, was also loaded with potentially demeaning overtones which could easily be invoked by a speaker depending on the context.

Martinicans generally asserted themselves as pigmented French citizens and thus denied any African ancestry. Fanon remarked that the Antillean black regarded Africa as "a country of savages, of barbarians, of natives, of servants... The African was a nigger (*nègre*) and the Antillean a European."⁷¹ Césaire was credited with having taken the humiliating term 'nigger' and boldly transforming it into the proud term 'black'. The specificity of Césaire's intervention and affirmation of his blackness arose from a particular historical conjuncture which was characterized by self-alienation – a condition he, along with many other

⁷⁰ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. Howard Greenfeld (New York: Orion Press, 1990), 25.

⁷¹ Azzedine Haddour, *The Fanon Reader: Frantz Fanon* (London: Pluto Books, 2006), 151.

blacks who expected equality with their European counterparts only to find a refusal of their humanity, was forced to confront.

In addition to its historical importance, Césaire's coining of the term "Negritude" possessed a philosophical dimension, later developed in the work of Fanon and Sartre. Notwithstanding the subsequent debates about the term, Negritude in Césaire's *Cahier* possessed a decidedly objective status, as the poet refuses to affirm the unity and essence of the black identity. What appealed to Fanon about Césaire's concept of Negritude, in contrast to Senghor's in particular, and other postulations of black identity that came before it, was that Césaire objectified the self-alienation of colonized black subjects through an act of creation. In *Cahier* he wrestled with the questions about the current political order and wrote:

Resistant Reason, you will not prevent me from casting, absurdly,
Upon the waters drifting on the tides of my thirst,
Your form, deformed islands
Your end, my defiance.⁷²

Césaire recognized, as did Fanon after him, that the recognition and renewal of the black self was only possible after an apocalyptic destruction of the current social order. After embracing his negritude, the poet would surrender himself to the 'dance' not just to the "beautiful-and-good-and-legitimate-to-be-black" dance of self recognition, but also to the dance that bust-the-iron-collar, and to the fire that consumed his weakness and cowardess.⁷³ Césaire asserted that the "unequal sun is no longer good enough" for him and he committed himself to the political struggle of his people. Fanon not only inherited from Césaire the passionate fiery desire for renewal of the colonial world, but he also sought to "invest the souls of men" which he understood as the awakening and opening of the minds through political education.⁷⁴ Sartre, in *Black Orpheus*, cited Damas

⁷² Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to a Native Land*, trans. Mireille Rosello with Annie Pritchard (Tarse, Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2004), 133.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 113-115.

⁷⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Penguin, 1967), 145.

and Briere who, like Césaire were anti-colonial poets who called their people to resistance. This allowed him to assert that:

for centuries of slavery, the black drank the cup of bitterness to the last drop; and slavery is a past fact that neither our authors nor their fathers have actually experienced. But also it is a hideous nightmare from which even the youngest of them are not yet sure of having awakened. From one end of the earth to the other, blacks – separated by languages, politics and the history of their colonizers – have a collective *memory* in common.⁷⁵

Sartre identified deeply with the black experience of exclusion from history and he was drawn to negritude's focus on resisting erasure and the silencing of the *collective* black reality. In *Anti-Semite and Jew* he concluded that, for the Jews this resulted in the spiritualization of the collective Jewish experience, and an over-reliance on religious explanation of the collective history. Kathryn Gines in her essay on Fanon and Sartre remarked that "in spite of the fact that the Jew has been continually in exile, or that the Negro has been scattered abroad by the slave trade and colonization, they can remain connected by their collective memory, not only of the past, but also of the present projects and future endeavours."⁷⁶

Fanon recalled a word of caution from Césaire when he told a young Fanon, that "whenever you hear anyone insult the Jews... they are speaking about you."⁷⁷ Coming to a similar conclusion as Césaire on the invention of the black, Sartre states that "if the Jew did not exist, the anti-semite would invent him."⁷⁸ However, although he was able to appreciate Césaire's construction of a collective identity of suffering characterized by race, Sartre's critique of negritude was undermined by his commitment to Marxist universalism. Sartre's

⁷⁵ Jean Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, 134.

⁷⁶ Kathryn Gines, "Fanon and Sartre 50 Years Later" *Sartre Studies International* Volume 9:2 (2003):55-67.

⁷⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 122.

⁷⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Anti-semite and the Jew*, trans. George Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 13.

apparent erasure of race in this regard would later become an issue which would prove insurmountable for Fanon.

The immediate post-war weakening of the European working class movement caused Sartre to imagine the revolutionary consciousness in a Hegelian perspective, being recovered in collaboration with the anti-colonial consciousness of Africa and the Caribbean. For Sartre a new proletarian spirit was made possible because of negritude which he regarded as a *vehicle* for the reactivation of a universal anti-capitalist project. Sartre's utilitarian approach to negritude did not make it possible for him to consider it as more than a mere site of activation, of a collective consciousness against colonialism. Sartre in essence relativised what for Fanon carried an irreducibly particular experiential dimension that is particular to black or indigenous people living under regimes of colonialism.

Fanon held firmly to the view that racially based identity claims, on the part of non-Europeans, would prove to be cathartic in the activation of black self-recognition. In response to Sartre's exposition of his colonial dialectic, Fanon wrote, "when I tried, on the level of ideas and intellectual activity, to reclaim my negritude, it was snatched away from me."⁷⁹ For Fanon, Sartre's dialectical narrative of decolonization failed to take account of the experiential dimension of black subjectivity in the Caribbean and France or other French colonies. In other words, Sartre's *Black Orpheus* failed fully to appreciate the 'lived experience of the black' when he reduced black anti-racist racialism to a merely formative 'stage' in a larger dialectical-historical process.⁸⁰

Notwithstanding his anxieties about Sartre, Fanon wrestled constantly with his own ambivalence towards negritude. While he was drawn to its radical embrace of blackness, he was suspicious of its privileging of religion and tradition

⁷⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 132.

⁸⁰ James Penney, "Passing into the Universal: Fanon, Sartre, and the Colonial Dialectic" *Paragraph* 27:3 (2004): 49-67.

in the recovery of a 'fantastical' black heritage. Thus, while he regarded it as liberating, he resisted it because of its spiritualizing of black history.

Césaire's conception postulated Negritude as self-estrangement that confronts the black subject as an object. For him, negritude "is not" the lifeless object society has reduced it to - stone, spot, or even tower - but instead, he viewed it as active, creative, and liberatory - "plunging," "piercing" through the world. Césaire applied to the realm of black subjectivity Hegel's insight that 'alienation' was in fact a transformational process in which the individual's so-called 'natural' existence had become substituted with an artificial, self-created one. Césaire's negritude was at once the naming and activation of the very process it described, tracing the liberation of black subjectivity through a confrontation with racism and colonialism.

This ambivalence was implicit in Césaire's original conception of the term in *Cahier*, and he increasingly abandoned any notion of Negritude as based upon a genetic or 'blood' inheritance or the myth of a glorified black past. This was evident from his assertion: "My Negritude has a ground. It is a fact that there is a black culture: it is historical, there is nothing biological about it."⁸¹ Similarly, interpretations of negritude in Fanon's work privileged its historical dimensions of negritude and in *The Wretched of the Earth* he pursued a phenomenology of black consciousness as it moved from immersion in 'the lived experience of the black' towards a self-conscious and fully historical human existence. In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon argued in response to Senghor's notion of negritude that "to believe that it is possible to create a black culture is to forget that niggers are disappearing."⁸² Gary Wilder in, *The French Imperial Nation-State*

⁸¹ Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to a Native Land*, transl. Mireille Rosello with Annie Pritchard (Tarse, Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2004), 115.; see also A. James Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 37.

⁸² Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 188.

wrote that “negritude’s cultural nationalism was not only a rational critique of colonialism; it was a critique of (colonial) rationality itself.”⁸³

What Fanon sought to argue was that negritude needed to be grounded, or at least related to the struggles of the people. He went on to suggest that no one “can truly wish for the spread of African culture if he does not give practical support to the creation of the conditions necessary to the existence of that culture”.⁸⁴ It had become clear that at this stage Fanon sought to draw the distinction between Césaire and Senghor’s use of negritude. Where in *Peau noir* he appeared to assert a blanket rejection of the movement, in *The Wretched of the Earth* he was more sympathetic to Césaire’s more historical and thus less mystical notion of negritude.

Benita Parry argued that for Césaire “negritude is not the recovery of a pre-existent state, but a textually invented history, an identity affected through figurative operations and topological constructions of blackness as the sign of the colonised condition and its refusal.”⁸⁵ In his critique of negritude Fanon showed a strong racial identity, and like Sartre’s account of the Jew, it offered no room for ethnicity, but relied heavily on the racist gaze as the foundation of its explanatory framework. James Arnold suggested that through the creation of a new literary style in *Cahier*, the transformation of black consciousness and the self-fashioning of the African-Caribbean is made possible. Finally, it is clear that negritude was invoked in the interests of ideological and cultural movements and it continued to be renewed in unexpected ways in the postcolony.

Negritude has emerged as a fundamental philosophical movement concerned with African and African diasporic identity and culture in the last hundred years.

⁸³ Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 258.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁸⁵ Benita Parry, “Resistance Theory: theorizing resistance” in *Colonial Discourse/ Postcolonial Theory*, 182.

The various colonial and metropolitan controversies around the term's reception and its deployment as a politicized, ideological category initiated one of the more significant debates in postwar global black thought. Senghor's elaboration of the term, though limited, marked a reversal of racist discourses in the West and provided a vision of the anti-colonial struggle in terms of the global struggle for recognition. Fanon, like Sartre, highlighted the necessary vigilance that should be maintained towards negritude's totalizing and racialized discourse, and in particular its tendency to conflate difference. Finally, except for its elaboration and critique by Fanon, Césaire's historicizing phenomenological use of the term remains largely unexplored, implying for the black subject the possibility of transformation that sustains and advances the project of black liberation, pointing beyond the circularity of identity politics towards a more fully realized freedom.

BLACKNESS AND MODERNITY: WRIGHT, FANON AND NATIVISM

This section will consider the intellectual and political continuities between Fanon and Richard Wright insofar as they deal with religion, tradition and modernity. Wright, like Fanon, emerged as an influential author and spokesperson for the black cause during the interwar period. Wright was born into a humble black Mississippi family, but overcame contemporary social and racial obstacles, to become a leading advocate of communism - initially in the US before he settled in Paris. His first work, *Uncle Tom's Children*, published in 1938, dealt with the struggle to maturity of oppressed black women and men. His most decisive literary contribution was the 1940 publication of *Native Son*, a novel about Bigger Thomas, a character whose life reflected the limitations imposed upon blacks living in 1930s America. *Native Son* made an immediate impact in intellectual circles raising the profile of the relatively young Richard Wright. But it was his autobiographical *Black Boy* that offered insight into the life and thoughts of the

man whose work Harold Bloom referred to as “the starting point for black literature in contemporary America.”⁸⁶

Black Boy catalogued Wright's life in a racist society, his rebellion against his family's religious tradition and his embracing of communism. He, like Fanon, would later (postwar) leave the country of his birth and settle in France where he joined the existentialist movement of Sartre. During this period his work shifted towards addressing the predicament of the self-fashioned black man who lived in a society not ready to recognize him as an equal. While Fanon made no explicit reference to Wright in his work, we know from records that he corresponded with Wright, indicating that, in fact, he had read his work. Further we know that they both attended the first congress of black writers and artists, where they both addressed similar themes on tradition, culture and modernity. This set them apart from the predominantly Africanist scholars at the congress.

Although they emerged from very different social contexts, Fanon and Wright both focused on the relationship between the social and the psychic as a way to discuss and critique the 'lived experience of the black'. Both engaged, and were influenced by, French intellectual traditions as they emerged after the war. They both, in a manner, represented black diaspora intellectuals and they both sought to apply much of their social and political theories to the advancement and independence of nations other than their own. Perhaps this was the nature of the global issues that confronted black intellectuals at the time. Frantz Fanon and Richard Wright both struggled with a deep identification and affinity with the suffering black masses. They shared a keenness to apply their theories about black oppression and alienation globally. In the final analysis they shared a determination to discuss the matter of black oppression and responses thereto

⁸⁶ Harold Bloom, "Introduction" in *Modern Critical Views: Richard Wright*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 2.

outside the rubric of race. This context and condition at the time was marked by what Abiola Irele described as a "deep racial anxiety".⁸⁷

Fanon and Wright shared an anxious ambition for a modern, wholly humanist conception of what the postcolonial black collective should look like, although they did not agree on how that should be achieved materially. Both were profoundly influenced by Marxism. Wright shared a close friendship with Marxian feminist Simone de Beauvoir and Fanon certainly read her work. While Wright argued for what can only be described as modernizing of the nation through industry, Fanon, in contrast, posited the idea of redemptive violence by the underclass as the basis for the revolutionary recovery of the nation to the people. However it was their shared idea of the conscious, rational black collective that set these two scholars in opposition to their African counterparts in particular.

Fanon and Wright, perhaps in part due to the prevailing communist rhetoric of the time, proposed the development of the black collective free from the shackles of religion and tradition. Wright's position on religion and tradition was made most clear in his essay entitled "Tradition and Industrialization", which he presented at the 1956 *Presence Africaine* Conference in Paris. I hope to bring Wright's essay into conversation with Fanon's chapter on "Racism and Culture" in *Toward the African Revolution*. These essays capture the ways in which both these 'icons of struggle' engaged with the issues of black identity, religion and tradition in relation to the nation.

Wright was one of the most influential black writers of his time, well known for his powerful novels about resistance to American racism and for his choice to exile himself in France rather than to live a diminished existence as a black person in America. In *Black Power*, a narrative account of his visit to the Ivory Coast (Ghana) during the early 1950s, Wright sought to make sense of the African

⁸⁷ Abiola Irele, *Blackness and Modernity*, unpublished manuscript (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2008), 13.

continent with which he felt bound by fate. The book received a less than favourable African reception. Many Africans found Wright's conclusions patronizing and insensitive. The South African essayist and intellectual, Ezekiel Mphahlele remarked that:

Wright took himself too seriously and expected Africans to warm to his approach immediately simply because he was black. He assessed the value of African cultures as he observed them in Ghana by Western standards and summed them up as inadequate, in spite of his own admission that he could not strike a medium for mutual understanding between him and the Ghanaians⁸⁸

This was not an entirely unfair assessment of *Black Power* since Wright was too casual with terms such as 'tribe', 'tribal', 'native', 'fetish', 'backward's and 'jungle' in his explanations of the African condition and worldview. While he held a narrow view of language,⁸⁹ and was judgmental of gender relations in Ghana,⁹⁰ it was his remarks on the religious culture of his host that exposed his Western conditioning. He asserted that "the religion of the Akan is not primitive, it is simply terrifying."⁹¹

Abiola Irele suggested that this anti-religious tone can be traced back to Wright's early life experiences as recounted in *Black Boy*. In *Black Boy* we learn of Wright's rebellion against the religious practices of his Seventh Day Adventist aunt and grandmother.⁹² Wright assumed that the African belief in the supernatural is symptomatic of a naivety peculiar to Africans. In presenting his essay, *Tradition and Industrialization* Wright found, although he had prepared the paper for an imaginary, ideal audience of a room filled with secular-minded

⁸⁸ Ezekiel Mphahlele, "Langston Hughes – Introduction to his Poetry", in *Introduction to African Literature*, ed. Ulli Beier (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 71; see also Gerard's discussion of the point in Albert S Gerard, *European Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 287 n.110.

⁸⁹ Richard Wright, *Black Power* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995), 118.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 125-127.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁹² Houston A Baker, Jr., "Reassessing (W)right: A Meditation on the Black (W)hole," in *Modern Critical Views: Richard Wright*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 138.

Africans,⁹³ he was confronted and frustrated by the views among his African peers that 'describe the African as being incurably religious' and he responded by saying:

What rivets my attention in the clash of East and West is that an irrational Western world helped, unconsciously and unintentionally, to smash the irrational ties of religion and custom and tradition in Asia and Africa.⁹⁴

Wright argued that the mere fact of contact between Europe and the colonies began a process of secularization, a process that he believed would alienate black people from western Christianity as well as from indigenous religious practices. Wright is undeniably "for black people", and notwithstanding its limitations, *Black Power* has often been said to be "an incitement to reflection" while others have asserted that his Wright's anti-imperialism is undermined by his disdainful assertions about African culture.⁹⁵ Abiola Irele argued that, in *Tradition and Industrialization*, Wright sought the complete overhaul and transformation of Africa. In his view, Wright "sustained exhortation throughout the book for a modernizing project, premised on a reasoned rejection of the traditional culture of Africa with which, as Wright avows in the book, he found himself unable to identify."⁹⁶

James Baldwin, in his essay, *Princes and Powers* testified to Wright's impatience with the complex ideas and modes of discourse among francophone delegates at the 1956 Paris Congress of Black Writers and Artists. In particular this meeting was marked by a fundamental difference that emerged between Senghor and Wright about the legacy of beliefs, institutions and forms of life of pre-colonial Africa. While Senghor privileged the recovery of a glorious African past, Wright argued that "religion and tradition... hamper man's mastery of his

⁹³ Richard Wright, "Tradition and Industrialization: The Tragic Plight of the African Elite," in *Présence africaine* (June–November 1956): 347–60.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Kevin Kelly Gaines, "Revisiting Richard Wright in Ghana: Black Radicalism and the Dialectics of Diaspora" *Social Text*, 67 Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer 2001): 75-101

⁹⁶ Abiola Irele, *Blackness and Modernity*, 9.

environment."⁹⁷It is not hard to imagine who Fanon would have sympathised with. Paul Gilroy, in reflecting on Wright's non-fiction, argued that it elaborated a discourse of modernity that Wright assumed to be considered a universal phenomenon.⁹⁸ Finally, Abiola Irele suggested that Wright's black utopia was an unsentimental one, and that his racial affinity with Africa was reduced to the personal.

Richard Wright, as Fanon's contemporary, articulated more explicitly a tension we only subtly detect in Fanon.⁹⁹ In the production of his work Wright, not unlike Fanon, appeared to be wrestling with a tension between modernity and racial solidarity. While we can only imagine the animated debates and discussions of the 1956 conference, and there is little doubt as to which side Fanon would have been on. The discourse of modernity that Wright proposed in *Black Power* comes at a very high cost, that of cultural sacrifice. In *Tradition and Industrialization* he regarded himself as free from the rot of irrational tradition.¹⁰⁰ When Wright made clear his position on African culture, it would have had strong resonances with Fanon's anxiety about negritude as nativism.

When we turn to Fanon, the questions of authentic African culture and the imposition of western modernity are framed in less restrictive terms, insofar as for Fanon it can only become part of the nation once it has reformed. Fanon puts the responsibility for this task at the feet of the native intellectual. It was precisely Wright's conclusion of *Tradition and Industrialization* that Fanon elaborated on in the second half of *The Wretched of the Earth*. Wright, like Fanon, argued that if the national black elite are allowed to advance themselves through the abuse of their power and state surveillance, the poor, out of distrust will retreat into a counter-absolutism. They both feared that a return to irrational absolutism and

⁹⁷ Richard Wright, "Tradition and Industrialization: The Tragic Plight of the African Elite," in *Présence africaine* (June–November 1956): 347–60.

⁹⁸ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 153-155.

⁹⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, Whites Masks*, 112-114.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Wright, "Tradition and Industrialization: The Tragic Plight of the African Elite," in *Présence africaine* (June–November 1956): 347–460.

Fanon asserted that “we must not voodoo the people” because he believed that it might lead to religious and ethnic wars that would undermine the hard fought for “precious heritage – freedom of speech, a secular state, the autonomy of science.”¹⁰¹

Fanon's essay, "*On National Culture*", is useful in that it offered a clear vision of how Fanon imagined the transformation of the African nation, after the initial violent and revolutionary grasp of power. Fanon and Wright, and other diaspora intellectuals, served as hugely determining influences on the emergence of the modern African nation. Abiola Irele suggested that Fanon represented the "end point that closes the line of diaspora thinkers in their concern for Africa"¹⁰² but then he leaves it at this point under-developed. However what was clear from Fanon's essay was the necessity for the native intellectual to take up the task of re-writing African history which extends beyond the “banal search for exoticism.”¹⁰³

From the two definitive currents that ran through the work of Fanon and Wright it appeared that the contribution of black diaspora intellectuals: (a) activated the necessity of a humanistic, modernizing project for the establishment of an African nation, and (b) highlighted the arresting and disruptive hold of traditional culture as delaying the inauguration of the postcolonial African nation. Fanon argued that during the revolutionary or political struggle the nature of tradition changes, and that “during periods of struggle traditions are fundamentally unstable and are shot through by centrifugal tendencies.”¹⁰⁴ He then went on to suggest that through the use of architecture, art and literature the native intellectual participated in the reconfiguration of the idea of the nation – free from the superstition and irrationality that he detected in Senghor's negritude.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 259; see also Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 157 and 161.

¹⁰² Abiola Irele, *Blackness and Modernity*, 22.

¹⁰³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 178.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 180.

¹⁰⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 127-128.

We get more of an idea of Fanon's regard for tradition in the life of the nation when he brings into relation his remarks on the issue of 'national culture'. In *A Dying Colonialism* the main theme appeared to be "re-invention" and he concluded the book with the assertion that "true independence produces the conditions for spiritual and material reconversion of man."¹⁰⁶ Likewise, even though he harboured some anxiety about liberation movements becoming single-party autocracies, Fanon envisioned a socialist future for Africa in *The Wretched of the Earth* where he asserted that the "restoring the nation" was only possible through the peasant resistance to colonization and exploitation.¹⁰⁷ Though *The Wretched of the Earth* has been called the "bible of decolonization" the foundations for the restructuring of the world were laid in *Black Skin, White Masks* – described by Irele as a "dramatic and formidable process of transformation."¹⁰⁸

Irele argued that Fanon effectively engaged in myth-making insofar as he conjured up a 'black utopia' which characteristically relied on grand expectations and tended to generate a "large vision of hope for the future."¹⁰⁹ In a Durkheimian move, Fanon argued in *On National Culture* for the transformation of the ordinary – pottery, music, art, poetry and architecture – and endowed it with extraordinary meaning to produce a conception of the nation that determined and transformed people's moods and motivations in relation to the nation. Although, in their attempts to define the substance of the postcolonial nation, both Fanon and Wright subjected 'tradition and modernity' to their strong Hegelian tendencies, they conceded that culture shapes the inner life of the nation and endows it with gravity and coherence. Thus culture, like religion is both vital and volatile.

¹⁰⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakom Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 179.

¹⁰⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 54-55.

¹⁰⁸ Abiola Irele, *Blackness and Modernity*, 18.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

I suggest that what Richard Wright and Frantz Fanon were engaged in was the “hollowing out” or the “bracketing off” of the troubling presence of tradition or folklore or superstition from their vision of the postcolonial nation. *Black Power* gave a clear indication of Wright’s belief in the necessity of sacrificing one’s culture for the establishment of one’s confidence or national sovereignty, while in *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon presented a Freudian-inflected argument that to recover from one’s alienation we need to transform, patterns, values and taboos. In both cases the arguments required a shift from the politics of narcissism to that of nationalism, thus the transformation of the individual was framed as intimately related to the transformation, and inauguration of the new nation.

FANON AND MEMMI: ON BEING SLAVES AND MONSTERS

Albert Memmi, a Tunisian born Jew, was another contemporary of Fanon who vehemently opposed the French colonization of Algeria. Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, first published in 1957 was a fascinating sociological and historical text which he described as “portraits of the two protagonists of the colonial drama and the relationship that binds them.”¹¹⁰ His narrative was not unlike those produced in other sites of empire at the time; but he nonetheless sought to analyse the disastrous effects of colonialism on both the colonizer and the colonized. He concluded that the evolution of colonization, in this case French Algerian, was more of a dialectical, finite struggle than a linear, continuous, infinite progression. Though *The Colonizer and the Colonized* was generally read in conjunction with Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* and Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, it was *The Wretched of the Earth*, especially in the chapters entitled *On National Culture* and *Colonial War and Mental Disorders* that related directly to Memmi’s argument.

¹¹⁰ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 145.

Memmi delved deep into the psychological machinations of all involved in colonization and, like Fanon, was especially concerned with the social alienation that emanated from French colonization of the Muslim majority. He conceded that, although they were not much better off than the Muslims, like the Martinican mulatto in relation to the black Antillean, the Jews of Algeria “passionately endeavored to identify themselves with the French. To them the West was the paragon of all civilization, all culture. The Jew turned his back happily on the East. They chose the French language, dressed in the Italian style, and joyfully adopted every idiosyncrasy of the Europeans.”¹¹¹ Thus Memmi wrestled with the condition of relative privilege and simultaneous alienation in his native Tunisia. He argued that the whole politico-socio institution of colonization turned ordinary Frenchmen into usurpers with Nero complexes.

He argued that the French colonizer was sober and aware of the atrocities being committed, but tried to erase his guilt by using his newfound power to create a projected image of himself: “He endeavors to falsify history, he rewrites laws, he would extinguish memories---anything to succeed in transforming his usurpation into legitimacy.”¹¹² Memmi suggested that even white Europeans, who were critical of the colonialists, harboured a deep suspicion of the assumed religious fundamentalism of the native Tunisian or Algerian. This deep ambivalence, which he terms the ‘nero complex’ reflected the same master-slave dialectic which Fanon explored in the ‘lived experience of the black’ insofar as it required the production of a mirrored image of the self, onto which the usurpers rage and self-loathing was projected.

The condition that Fanon defined as the alienation of self, Memmi described as that state when the colonized becomes “divorced from reality”.¹¹³ Thus the colonized can either be assimilated into the dominant culture, or rebel against it. Both Memmi and Fanon insisted that revolution is an unavoidable and

¹¹¹ Ibid., xiv.

¹¹² Ibid., 52.

¹¹³ Ibid., 106.

necessary phase of decolonization. Memmi argued that when the colonized started to feel like a foreigner in his own country, rebellion became inevitable.

Like Fanon, Memmi recognized that the colonial society is diseased and that no renewal was possible without total revolution.¹¹⁴ But unlike Fanon, Memmi argued that because religion had been such an important part of the local culture it was likely to assume a significant role in the anti- and post-colonial context. He argued that for the local Muslim population, religion was a retreat, not unlike the condition of familial affiliation and loyalty, and that what was being observed by outsiders as militant zeal, was in fact religious formalism.¹¹⁵ Of course Fanon did not hold religion in quite the same regard as Memmi, but they were of the same mind when it came to the effects of colonization on the colonised:

his condition is absolute and cries for an absolute solution; a break and not a compromise. He has been torn away from his past and cut off from his future, his traditions are dying and he loses the hope of acquiring a new culture.¹¹⁶

In the closing chapters of *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon described, in detail, some of the devastating effects of the French colonization of Algeria. One disastrous effect on the colonized peoples of Algeria was the self-devaluation, self-hatred, and internalized racism that came about as a byproduct of colonialism. In his essay *On National Culture* he argued that the object of French colonial policy was “to drive into the *natives’* heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality.”¹¹⁷ The French colonialists regarded Algerian culture “before the advent of colonialism . . . (as) dominated by barbarism.”¹¹⁸ Consequently, the religious values and practices of the Algerian Muslims became a major site of

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 165.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 166-167.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 193-194.

¹¹⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 169.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 171.

struggle between the colonists and revolutionaries. Although the French viewed “the Algerians, the veiled women, the palm trees and the camels” as the “*natural* background to the *human* presence” in Algeria, they also argued that veiled women were a reflection of the masculine brutality of Islamic culture. Fanon argued that as a result of all this pent up humiliation, some Algerians experienced acute psychological problems which he explored in the chapter of case studies entitled *Colonial War and Mental Disorders*.

Notwithstanding his realization of the psychic scar that came about as a result of denial of Islamic tradition, Fanon nonetheless took a very functionalist position when it came to Islam. He conceded that traditional Muslim practices for organizing the rural poor were permissible, and that women wearing the veil were at once an assertion of anti-colonialism, but also a useful practical way to move weapons and messages between revolutionary hideouts.

Fanon, like Memmi, also recognized that colonialism had brutal effects on the French colonizers as well. Those who would have been kind and gentle-mannered back home in France became sadists and torturers in the ever growing “fascist” colonial regime. Finally, both Memmi and Fanon had clearly explicated the numerous horrors of colonialism, on both sides of the issue. While the colonized were enslaved and humiliated, the colonizers in their pursuit of becoming masters instead turned into monsters, wracked by their own guilt. Fanon and Memmi were in agreement that it is only after total and possibly violent revolution that both sides would be fully free to pursue their full humanity beyond the constraints of colonialism.

There existed a deep and enduring correlation between the work of Fanon, Albert Memmi and Richard Wright. They all were writing after World War II, at a time when black discontent emerged most forcefully. They wrote about the black condition globally, while being relatively dislocated (Fanon and Wright were both in countries other than that of their respective national origins). In their work, Frantz Fanon and Richard Wright respectively tried to capture the mood of

this time of rapid political transformation in Africa and Asia. Both authors attempted to understand the relationship between the industrialization of Europe, decolonization, and the accompanying practices of racism. Ultimately they sought to transcend the dialect of race, religion and economic exploitation as they attempted to explain these conditions in humanistic terms.

While Fanon saw racism as only one element of the more complex culture of systematized oppression and economic exploitation of people, Wright explained racism as an irrational outcome of post-enlightened Europe. Finally, Memmi regarded racism as a product of European privilege in the colonies and a mechanism of domination over the colonized. Fanon's notion of racism as the result of systematized oppression emerged from his understanding of the intimate relationship between practices of rule and the evolution of economic relations in perfecting the means of production. He went on to suggest that the relentless acts of oppression resulted in the colonized becoming alienated. This alienation, Fanon interpreted as the ambivalence and sense of dissonance that the oppressed felt towards both their degraded traditional cultures and the cultures of the oppressor. Like Wright, Fanon felt that racism was not only irrational but that it 'bloats and disfigures the culture that practices it'. Memmi feared that it not only disfigured European self-conception but resulted in a permanent erasure of indigenous traditions.

Fanon argued that the tendency to regard racism as a mental quirk had to be abandoned and he insisted that racism was no accident, psychologically or socially. For Fanon racial prejudice adhered to a flawless logic insofar as it was not possible to enslave people without 'logically' making them inferior. Likewise, if a society relied on the exploitation of other people to sustain its economic relations, the society invariably regarded the oppressed as inferior, and it was therefore a racist society.

While Memmi saw the arrival of Europeans as marking the end of indigenous religions and tradition, Richard Wright, attempting to reconcile his dual identity

as both westerner and a person of colour, situated the understanding of racism in the context of the greater human endeavour to attain freedom beyond being biologically or socially determined (whether by the norms of nobility, tradition or religious institutions). He reminded his audience that “the very logic of the world they (Europeans) were creating, rendered the practices of racism irrational and insane. Seeking to advance his argument for rationality, Wright attempted to draw parallels between the medieval reformation of the church, with its unintended contribution to the European enlightenment, and the challenges faced by Africa and Asia now, “wrapped in ancestor religion, powerful religion, sensitive and vital”.¹¹⁹ He regarded religion and tradition as irrational. He argued that the more exotic and outlandish the natives of Africa acted (even if colonially sanctioned or not) the longer they remained alienated from the struggle for sovereignty and for freedom from colonial occupation.

Fanon was anxious that what emerged would be an irrational return to archaic primitivism. In engaging his predecessors and contemporaries Fanon sought to resolve the apparent discrepancy between the intellectual and industrial development on the one hand and the irrational, emotional basis of struggle on the other hand. Although, Fanon and Wright, respectively went on to argue that while the oppressed/ native engaged in pronouncing an irreversible condemnation of their own cultural style or may be irredeemably religious, that the encounter with Europe set off a more profound and far-reaching revolution.

These writers have attempted to understand and explain the ways in which oppressed and formerly oppressed peoples have responded to/ acted out in relation to their condition of alienation. Because he believed that the West had never been honest about how it overcame its blinding customs, Wright seemed to harbour a deep anxiety that Africans and Asians might never really overcome their stultifying traditions in order to become industrialized. Similarly, Fanon concluded that while the oppressed person may initially, in the face of racism

¹¹⁹ Richard Wright, “Tradition and Industrialization: The Tragic Plight of the African Elite,” in *Présence africaine* (June–November 1956): 347–60

and prejudice, have experienced guilt and inferiority, their cultures/ traditions had now become objects of passionate attachment. He referred to this state as a continual honeymoon, a period marked by endless overvaluation. And thus in agreement with Wright, Fanon concluded that it was through the rolling back of the curtain(s) of race, colour, religion and tradition that we would see the emergence of the 'freest' people.

Finally this makes possible the positioning of Fanon in relation to three contemporary engagements with religion. Césaire's negritude emerged as the spiritual recovery of indigenism; while the modernist rationalism espoused by Wright sought to exorcise religion from the politics of black self-fashioning. Finally, Albert Memmi's psychology of the colonial situation regarded religion and identity as mutually entangled such that attempts to exorcise religion would only further undermine the recovery of the black self.

CHAPTER THREE

MARTINIQUE: FORMATIVE ENGAGEMENTS WITH RACE, CLASS AND RELIGION

For a long time Martinique has held a peculiar place in the French metropolitan imagination. The early history of the island was generally framed in terms of the French exploitation of the island in the plantation economy. During the twentieth century much of what had been written about the island revolved around the island's writers and the body of work that they had produced. They had made a significant contribution to the literary and political traditions in the Caribbean, and the Third World in general. As I have suggested in the previous chapter, in order to truly understand the social and historical forces that shaped Fanon the person, the intellectual, and the revolutionary, we have to understand not only the intellectual currents that shaped his ideas about religion but also the historical context. Martinique was not only a place where Fanon grew up, it was also the place where he became politically aware, and although he never returned there after he relocated to Algeria, it forever occupied a special place in his intellectual inquiry on race, class and religion. Martinique also represented those elements in Fanon's thinking that were unresolved issues and unintended consequences of French colonial policies, whether encountered through assimilation or expulsion. In this chapter I hope to propose some of the origins of the ambivalent engagements with religion which will be further explored in the next chapter.

Fanon's very Caribbean text, *Black Skin, White Masks*, was undoubtedly influenced by the works of other Martinicans such as René Maran's *Batoula* and *Un homme pareil aux autres*, Aimé Césaire's *Cahier retour au pays natal*, Mayotte Capécia's *Je suis martiniquaise* and Joseph Zobel's *La Rue des cases-nègres*. All these early texts, published before 1955, like Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* were always part autobiographical, part characterized by an anti-colonial polemic, in that they simultaneously addressed the often severe

conditions of black existence under colonialism and served to articulate narratives of social and political self-fashioning by blacks during this period. These texts were a window on the period of late colonialism on the island from the perspective of the black islanders.

After the island became an overseas department of France in 1946, a new wave of political literature emerged under the label of creolization, a tradition that sought to dispel the idea of the region as characterized by fragmentation and loss as a result of slavery. Led by scholars such as Edouard Glissant, author of *Le Discours antillais* (Caribbean Discourse), and Patrick Chamoiseau, who authored *Texaco* and *Childhood*, a literary and political tradition emerged from the idea that the Caribbean identities were not 'knock-offs' of Europe, but were defined by their ceaseless redefinition. For these scholars and writers, their Caribbeanness was defined by hybridity and local practices of exchange and transformation that had their roots in local responses to slavery and colonialism. In a body of work that would define the study of the Caribbean, Mintz and Price, drawing on the work of Melville Herskovits and Levi Strauss, argued that creolization had its roots in the culture of slavery as well as in resistance to the conditions of enslavement.¹

More recently Yelvington and Praeger have proposed kinship practices, gender relations and religious cosmologies as a way to understand the relations between Africa and slavery in shaping the unique conditions found in the Caribbean.² However, others have sought to disrupt the dominant idea of the Caribbean, introduced by Herskovits, Mintz and French anthropologist, Michelle Leiris, all of who argued that the Caribbean was culturally consistent with Africa. Edouard Glissant, the Martinican scholar and novelist, argued that creole

¹ Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African American Culture: An Anthropological Approach* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992)

² Kevin Yelvington, "The Anthropology of Afro-Latin America and the Caribbean: Diasporic Dimensions", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, (2001) 30: 227-260

emerged not out of its relation to Africa but rather out of the convergence of a unique set of social and historical relations.

Historically, the island, like much of the Caribbean, had been defined by the convergence of language and cultural and religious practices that gave birth to such traditions as Vodou, Candomble, Rastafari and Santeria. We have recently witnessed the fetishization of Caribbean religious or cultural practices in popular media where Hollywood depicts followers of these traditions as either mindless zombies or malevolent practitioners of dark magic. Accordingly, the writing about Martinique by Martinicans changed as the political conditions on the island shifted. The early period was marked by colonial travel narratives penned by Europeans, but the beginning of the twentieth century saw the emergence of passionate assimilationist or anti-colonial texts, both seeking to give expression to the black experience. Consistent with Fanon's compelling argument that the black experience was a bodily experience, most of these texts addressed the condition of the black body, whether that be in reproduction, the whitening of the black race, eugenics, penal lashings, and resistance or religious performance.³ Finally, recent texts have sought to define Martinique, not so much by its relation to France, but by its place in the Caribbean community of nations, emphasizing the social and political continuities that exist between the island and its immediate neighbours.

Abiola Irele argued that Martinican history can be separated into three distinct periods, namely: the slave period which extended from the arrival of Europeans in the region until the abolition of slavery in 1848; the colonial period which ended with the departmentalization of the island in 1946; and the citizen period, under which the Island enjoyed full rights and protection of the French sovereign

³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 110-113.

state.⁴ David Marley referred to the early period as an antecedent period when the Island changed hands between France, Holland and England until the early nineteenth century when it more or less became a permanent French territory. He argued that the last hundred years, until 1901, was characterised by stagnation, except for the two decades prior to departmentalization which were marked by social and economic recovery. This was largely due to the rapid expansion of Fort de France following the eruption of *Mont Pelee*, and the consequent destruction of Saint Pierre.

Marley attributed particular significance to the war period and the accompanying hardships for the islanders as a decisive influence on Martinique's modern evolution and decision to assume the status as a French Overseas Department.⁵ Édouard Glissant divided the island's history into seven periods that break local history up according to the relation of the local population to the economy, such as the slave trade, plantation economy, emergence of an elite, etc. Patrick Chamoiseau marked out local history according to the changes in the physical geography or the built environment and he outlined five epochs: the age of shelter and longhouses, the age of straw, the age of crate wood, followed by the ages of asbestos and finally that of concrete.⁶

When considering the relationship between Martinique and France, one should understand that the island was regarded as within and part of France. In fact many French children learnt about French national geography from maps which featured three insets, one of which is of Martinique. Since its change of status from that of colony to a *Département d'Outer-Mer* (DOM) or Overseas

⁴ Abiola Irele, "Literature and Ideology in Martinique: René Maran, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon," in *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology*, ed. Abiola Irele (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 128.

⁵ David Marley, *Historic Cities of the Americas* (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 183.

⁶ Édouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Seuil, 1981), 155-156; and Patrick Chamoiseau, *Texaco* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 3-6.

Departments, all residents were afforded full citizen status. Martinique was regarded as an old colony of the French empire. Apart from twice during the 1700's when it fell to British occupation, it has remained a French possession since 1802. This is primarily due to it being the source of valuable commodity at the time as a producer of sugar.

Katherine Brown argued that “material dependency on France and the psychological rejection as true French reproduced the tensions of assimilation and reinforced an irreducible “twoness” of identity.”⁷ Browne went on to suggest that this “twoness” of identity produced among Martinicans a “simultaneous embrace of and disdain towards France.”⁸ However, the mulattos, who often benefitted from metropolitan education, used their positions as leverage to produce a class of professional elites.

Martinique has experienced nearly 400 years of uninterrupted French control and influence. Fort de France was regarded as a standard bearer of French culture, with much of the island's infrastructure and observable customs being distinctly French. Katherine Browne argued that in Martinique “French culture also permeates people's everyday lives and identities: standard French is ubiquitous; the overwhelmingly Catholic population fills cathedrals every Sunday;... the most telling indicator of the degree to which the urban islanders regard France as a natural part of their lives is that one-third of Martinique's native-born population now live in metropolitan France”.⁹ She added that “in Martinique, the ideals of monogamy, the nuclear family, and male authority was strongly promoted by the Catholic Church.”¹⁰ However, despite the decision to pursue assimilation and the accompanying prosperity, the people of Martinique continued to suffer the indignities of an over-dependence on French citizenship

⁷ Katherine E. Browne, *Creole Economics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 184-185.

for subsidies and grants to maintain their standard of living;¹¹ and they have had to endure being treated as second class citizens in metropolitan France. Browne wrote that:

what gave birth to the modern Caribbean, a cross-continental circulation of goods and people, languages and commodities, and ideas that swirl in new circles and with new intensities. The collective impact of these heterogeneous influences is transforming local societies into polycultural worlds where new sources of knowledge and desire compete for space and where the practice of culture is no longer bound to a particular place.¹²

By this view Martinicans did not imagine a primordial origin in Africa and some scholars have gone on to suggest that Martinican identity was fashioned in the sugar plantations. Clearly, Martinique, unlike other former colonies in the region, sought integration into the former colonizers' nation instead of independence. While Richard Price argued that Martinicans had so wholly internalized the values of the colonizers that they were quite happy to forget their long history of bondage, rape and oppression, Paul Gilroy cautioned against reading Martinicans' internalizing of French values as necessarily being the same as forgetting one's past or collapsing one's history and identity into a European one. While Browne did not clarify what she understood as the "new sources of knowledge competing for space" others have argued that Martinican identities were shaped by the conflation of Catholicism and local diasporic religions and cultures or by the adaptation of Caribbean practices to the conditions of modernity.

However, it would seem that Caribbean identities were shaped not only through adaptation of local practices to Catholicism, but also significantly by the exclusion and denial of locally practiced diasporic religious traditions. Apart

¹¹ Justin Daniel, "The French *Departements d'outre mer*. Martinique and Guadeloupe," in *Extended Statehood in the Caribbean*, eds. Lammert de Jong and Dirk Kruijt (Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2005), 80.

¹² Katherine E Browne, *Creole Economics*, 11.

from Roger Bastide's study of Afro-American religions, *Le Ameriques Noirs* and his *Social Origins of Religion*, as well as and George Eaton Simmon's *Religious Cults of the Caribbean*, the limited interest in religion of the region gave "rise to a quaint or exotic vision of what has been called the magic of the West Indies or the enchantment of the Caribbean."¹³ Fanon himself conceived of religious traditions in the Antilles in terms of magic and animism.¹⁴ He viewed religion as a vital but also an infectious force that could cohere a community but also a force that compromise that cohere and social stability. Descriptions of the region as a fertile ground for the exotic resulted in an under-valuing of the role that religion had played in the history and development of the Caribbean.

Browne suggested that over the 150 years after the French revolution the ideals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* were so intimately part of the French identity that these ideals extended well into France's various colonies. She concluded that Martinique's choice to become assimilated into France in 1946 "reflects the conviction of French Caribbean islanders that being French is their rightful identity."¹⁵ However, William Miles argued that although it started as a literary movement in the 1930's, *negritude* marked the beginning of a period during which Martinicans would no longer see themselves as pigmented Frenchmen, but as a distinct people with their own distinct political status.¹⁶ But despite the use of literature, language, history and religion (through *negritude*, creole, slave rebellion and Rastafari) for political purposes, the use of cultural revivalism in Martinique has generally failed. This could be attributed to the lack of an indigenous intelligentsia with whom the western educated elite could collaborate.

¹³ Laennec Hurbon, "New Religious Movements in the Caribbean" in *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*, ed. James A. Beckford (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1991), 146.

¹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 126.

¹⁵ Katherine E Browne, *Creole Economics*, 27.

¹⁶ William Miles, *Elections and Ethnicity in French Martinique* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986), 177.

Of course, Fanon was born during this period of transition from colonialism to departmentalization and he witnessed the changing fortunes of his people. The racism that he witnessed in Europe and North Africa altered the way that Fanon viewed Martinique and its dependent relation to France. Once he became wholly involved in the Algerian anti-colonial struggle he would never again set foot on Martinique. His ambivalence towards the island was born out in the mixture of critique of the islander's politics of racist complacency and his nostalgia for the carefree days of his childhood. Some scholars overstated the significance of Martinique in shaping Fanon's politics, while others suggested that his relationship with his mother accounted for his sense of alienation which would then become the basis of his life's work. Then of course there are other Fanon scholars who paid no attention to his childhood and exclusively focussed on his revolutionary interests as a way to understand Fanon, the activist. This chapter will review the context of Fanon's upbringing as a site of knowledge production and to illustrate the complexity of the relations between the civil administration, the church, creole culture and the racial stratification of French colonies. It will also offer insight into some early social and political conditions that informed the life of Fanon long after he left the confines of the island.

COLONIAL MARTINIQUE

After the French Revolution, the West Indies with its particular integration of slavery and colonialism emerged as a sought after possession of the new French state. Henri Brunschwig declared that "our colonies of the West Indies are admirable: they have items of trade that we do not, nor cannot have."¹⁷ Even Voltaire favoured the Caribbean islands over a large territory like Canada which he referred to as "some acres of snow", though he was not so convinced that the trade of cocoa, sugar and indigo would enrich France. In fact he regarded the island in terms of its goods which simply "flatter our new appetites by fulfilling

¹⁷ Henri Brunschwig, *La Colonization française du pact colonial à la union française* (Paris: Calmann-levy, 1949), 10.

our new needs.”¹⁸ It was not until the French Revolution that the question of slavery was reconsidered. Until then it was actively encouraged by government as economically prudent.

Even though slavery had some additional religious justification, in that it was generally regarded as a mechanism for exposing ‘idolators’ and ‘Mohammedans’ to the spiritual benefits of Christianity, it became increasingly difficult to dismiss the appalling conditions of cruelty and death that slaves were subjected to on these islands. Thus the *Code Noir* (Black Code) was promulgated in 1685 to offer some protection to slaves under colonial rule. While the Code sought to regulate relations between slaves and their masters, in recognizing the humanity of slaves, masters were effectively appointed to act as “good family fathers”. This meant that slaves were denied civil rights, and could not acquire property or marry without the consent of their master. The Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, with its aim to abolish distinctions based on privilege and its promise of equality, was less clear on whether the liberty (of the French citizen) was synonymous with the emancipation (for France’s slaves).¹⁹

In the immediate aftermath of the revolution the only issue pertaining to people of colour that received attention was the status of free coloureds and mulattoes, who were granted equal political and civil rights regardless of their parent’s civil status. As France sought to assimilate the colonies, as departments of the metropole, the republic soon grew anxious that its new policies might place too much of a demand on its dwindling financial resources. Thus “indifference to the fate of the West Indies” meant that France would eventually withdraw from active involvement in the social, economic and political administration of the island.²⁰

¹⁸ William Miles *Elections and Ethnicity in French Martinique*, 22-23.

¹⁹ Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France Vol. 1* (London: Penguin Book, 1961), 164.

²⁰ William Miles, *Elections and Ethnicity in French Martinique*, 31.

Timeline of France's Overseas Policy

Social Philosophy	Racism	Abberant Assimilation	Gradual Assimilation	Official Assimilation	Liberal Pluralism
1635	1660s	1794 – 1802	1848 - 1871	1946	1985
Discovery of Martinique	Beginning of Slave Trade	First Emancipation		Vichy Occupation	
Legal Structure	Institutionalized Slavery		Colonialization Until 1946	Departmentalization	Decentralization

Copied and adapted from a diagram in William Miles, *Elections and Ethnicity in French Martinique*

William Miles contended that Martinique, like the rest of the West Indies, was French only insofar as the island was populated by French citizens and French speakers, and was governed by French law, but that ultimately its class structure and simultaneous revolution were the result of its specifics as a creole society. The particular shape and nature of this society began to take form when "at the instigation of the *petit blancs*, a royal questionnaire resulted in a body of laws called the *Code Noir*. The French government was convinced that to continue to allow concubines and their mulatto children liberty would be the end of slavery. The code ruled, therefore, that thereafter the children of mixed slave-free unions were to remain the same status as the mother, whose freedom could no longer be bought"²¹

The law also prevented slaves from being taught to read and write French but it

²¹ Mariam K Slater, *The Caribbean Family: Legitimacy in Martinique* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 49.

regulated the treatment of slaves, and provided protection from abuses and forced marriage. As such, civil liberty and education became defining features of the Martinican aspiration for freedom, and it was therefore not surprising that during the next few centuries the French colonial practices of assimilation were negotiated around these same concerns. In fact, it so defined Martinican identity that for a long period after freedom from slavery and later colonialism, Martinicans continued to selfishly guard their French citizenship, language and education.

As was characteristic of European interventions in the colonies; "although the *code noir* influenced by canon and Roman law as well as by the Bible placed slaves outside the province of metropolitan law, the Catholic slave was part of the Church. However this feature of Catholicism, automatic membership, was more an obligation than a privilege, and the demand extended well beyond the slave population."²² As such, all who attempted to resist or oppose the practice of Catholicism, even among the slaves, were punished. Baptism became one of the few lures to accepting religion, for instead of burial in a holy cemetery, unbaptised slaves were, according to the *Code*, "interred during the night in some neighbouring field."²³ We may conclude that early French rule in Martinique was characterized by Catholic religion, education and the promise of citizenship – all themes that were reflected in the work of Martinican writers and scholars such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Mayotte Capécia, Édouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau.

Henry Lemery argued that "Martinique was to be much less shaken by the shocks sent out from the mother country than by her own passions."²⁴ For him the ambivalence between Martinique and France was further exacerbated by the conflict between metropolitan traders and planters in Martinique which further

²² *Ibid.*, 50.

²³ *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁴ Henry Lemery, *La Revolution a la Martinique* (Paris: Larose, 1936), 84.

alienated the island in the French imagination at the time. By the early 1800s French interest in the West Indies, as a source of revenue, had begun to wane quite significantly. In fact, after the English returned the islands to France, Napoleon, at the recommendation of Josephine, a *grande blanche* herself, re-established slavery in the West Indian colonies. This resulted in various progressive measures related to mulattoes and free blacks being repealed and a reversal of the French policy of assimilation. Thus Martinique's long history and relationship to metropolitan France has always been ambivalent and one marked by insecurity and codependence.

France's colonial policy as applied to the West Indies has traditionally wavered, between nationalistic sentiments and budgetary calculation, between assimilationist and imperial governments, between political equality and colonialist rule. If indeed a certain insecurity, or *meffiance*, characterizes the Martinican assessment of French intentions, even today, it is to the historical record – and France's less than straightforward colonial doctrine – that we may look for the explanation.²⁵

In his article "Race, Reason, Impasse: Césaire, Fanon and the Legacy of Emancipation", Gary Wilder referred to Martinique as "a place of geographic decadence and social stasis... here indigenous life remains inert and mute".²⁶ Wilder echoed the sentiment expressed by Césaire in *Notebook of a Return to a Native Land* wherein he recorded having being disturbed by the colonial squalor and social immobility of the Island. This depressed perspective reflected one of the two views that dominated the image of Martinique in the popular imagination, or at least in the postwar literature about the francophone Caribbean – tropical opulence or social decay. Andre Breton, the principle founder of surrealism, who was described by the Vichy administration as a 'dangerous anarchist', wrote in his book *Snake Charmer* that his senses were overwhelmed by the beauty of Martinique when he arrived there from an

²⁵ William Miles, *Elections and Ethnicity in French Martinique*, 42.

²⁶ Gary Wilder, "Race, Reason, Impasse: Césaire, Fanon and the Legacy of Emancipation" *Radical History Review* Issue 90 (Fall 2004): 31-61

occupied France in 1941. He wrote of how he was struck by the rich textures and exotic fragrances, of how he wandered around and in a way succumbed to the skies. However, after some days of exploring the island and reading some of Césaire's work in *Espirit*, a locally produced journal, he came to the conclusion that:

Behind this screen of foliage is the misery of a colonized people, shameless exploitation by a fistful of parasites who defy the very laws of the land that they themselves wrote, and undisturbed at dishonoring it.²⁷

Since the abolition of slavery in 1848 Martinique experienced a gradual shift in the distribution of power, knowledge, wealth and authority which were once largely in the hands of white colonists. During the next 100 years, until the island's change of status to become a French Overseas Department (DOM), Martinique, although still characterized by a plantation economy, saw rapid changes in mobility and political participation for its black population, particularly the mulatto population. Abiola Irele suggested that "the social symbols that governed collective life in Martinique were thus wholly weighted against the black man, and the purely social factors of his collective life combined with the cultural in what amounted to his negation by the dominating racial ideology of Martinique."²⁸ The island's history is one of complex racial stratification.

Echoing sentiments expressed by the groundbreaking French anthropologist Michel Leiris, Fanon argued that in the face of modernity the decline of creole was inevitable because, with increasing education, creole was bound to become a relic.²⁹ Leiris, in association with *Les Temps modernes*, published a UNESCO-commissioned report on his visit to Martinique and Guadeloupe, which Fanon found to be consistent with his experience of the island. Fanon in *Black*

²⁷ Andre Breton, *Martinique: Snake Charmer* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 92.

²⁸ Abiola Irele, "Literature and Ideology in Martinique: Rene Maran, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon", 4.

²⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 27.

Skin, White Masks uncritically referenced Leiris' privileging of education as the path towards development - Black Shack Alley's "second door to our freedom" – when he cited Leiris's concern about the lack of school facilities and the paucity of reading materials. Although he made the connection between creole and folklore Leiris dismissed creole as "something learned" by the native intellectual to authenticate their race in the face of colonialism.³⁰ We only have to read the following excerpt from one of Leiris' texts to appreciate the impact he had on Fanon's idea of culture:

A culture is inseparable from history. ... It's not something fixed, but rather something moving. ... As for the preservation of cultures, ...it would be futile to preserve them as they are because, even if that could be done, it would mean subjecting them to a process of petrification.³¹

Unlike his contemporary, Levi-Strauss, who sought to recover the essence of "primitive" cultures and insulate them against the threat of modernization, of Leiris we can conclude that "what interested him, anthropologically, were not pristine worlds on the wane, but rather a phenomenon he called *clash*, the dynamic of potentially messy contact zones, the process of worlds grappling with intercultural relationships in which history and differential power were determining factors."³² Thus Leiris' critical reading of colonial social relations in Martinique, though slightly sanitized, would have appealed to Fanon during their exchanges.³³

While Fanon collaborated with ethnologists and anthropologists such as Leiris, Levi-Strauss and Metraux in anti-colonial campaigns or their critique of European expansionism, he remained at odds with their interest in the Antillean colonial

³⁰ Ibid., 40; citing Michel Leiris, "Martinique-Guadeloupe-Haiti", *Les Temps modernes* (February 1950):1347

³¹ Michel Leiris, "L'ethnologue devant le colonialisme," *Les Temps Modernes* 58 (1950), reprinted in *Cinq études d'ethnologie* (Paris: Gonthier-Denoël, 1969), 91 and 99.

³² Sally Price, "Michel Leiris, French Anthropology and a Side Trip to the Antilles", *French Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol.22, Issue 1 (2004): 23-35.

³³ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life* (London: Granta, 2000), 210.

context. They had all travelled to the region and advanced theories of the proposed relation between France and the Antilles. Macey in his biography of Fanon intimated that there might have been tensions between Fanon and these scholars,³⁴ at least insofar as they sought to engage with the Antilles as a magical zone, where voluntary and involuntary spirit possession characterized the social order, a characteristic described by Balme as the Caribbean theatre of ritual.³⁵ So while they denounced French racism and the Vichy occupation of Martinique, these scholars continued to describe the island in very exotic terms. Their views were not very unlike contemporary ideas about the tropics as a “place of magic, mystery and sexual vitality.”³⁶

Leiris together with George Bataille and others founded the *College de Sociologie* who through a “quasi-sacred and desubjectivated vision of society significantly sought to resist the formalization of all identity by conventionally political schemata.”³⁷ From their observations of “primitive” societies, Leiris and Bataille would adjust Durkheim’s notion of the social origins of the sacred, and propose that “expenditure, loss, sacrifice, eroticism and violence form the basis for sacred communication.”³⁸ Although Leiris and Levi-Strauss would go on to pursue cultures affected by modernity, and properly exotic cultures respectively, they would nonetheless, like Alfred Metraux, another close friend and colleague of Bataille, continue to identify the question of the sacred as central in cohering social relations. Metraux wrote of vodou:

It usually conjures up visions of mysterious deaths, secret rites - or dark saturnalia celebrated by 'blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened' negroes. The picture of Voodoo which this book

³⁴ Ibid., 210-211.

³⁵ Christopher E Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 95.

³⁶ David Beriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Authenticity and Activism in Urban France* (Bolder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 63.

³⁷ Sean Hand, “Alter Ego: the Critical Writings of Michele Leiris”, *Legenda*, Research Monograph in French Studies No.17 (Oxford: legenda, 2007): 3.

³⁸ Michele Richman, “Leiris's *L'Age d'homme*: Politics and the Sacred in Everyday Ethnography,” *Yale French Studies*, No. 81, On Leiris (1992): 91-110.

will give may seem pale beside such images.

In fact - what is Voodoo? Nothing more than a conglomeration of beliefs and rites of African origin, which, having been closely mixed with Catholic practice, has come to be the religion of the greater part of the peasants and the urban proletariat of the black republic of Haiti. Its devotees have asked what men have always asked of religion: remedy for ills, satisfaction of needs and the hope for survival.³⁹

It is precisely this European pre-occupation with describing non-western culture in terms of religion that Fanon found hard to reconcile with his vision of the 'new man' and the 'new national culture'. While these scholars demonstrated a clear commitment to ending colonialism, they nonetheless envisaged native people in terms of "primitive religion".

Mariam Slater argued that "despite legal equality, the Negroes of Martinique are a depressed group, since most of the wealth is in the control of a dozen families of another race. (Yet) the personality of the Martinican Negro shows none of the bitterness, resignation, or insecurity characteristic of some 'colonial' negroes."⁴⁰ She attributed this lack of revolutionary will to the fact that whites were not pushed aside but that they sought to withdraw. She observed that in Martinique one can go about your business on any one day without ever coming across a white person or *beke* which obscured the fact of the vast socio-economic inequalities between different racial groups. In her essay chapter, 'The Island Walkers and Forrest Wanderers', a study of how different scholars experienced Martinique, Michele Praeger suggested that, unlike the surrealists, Édouard Glissant asserted that the islands particular geography defined its cultural traditions. Praeger wrote that:

The sea imprisons the Island, threatens it inescapably ("all islands

³⁹ Alfred Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti* (New York: Schocken, 1972)

⁴⁰ Mariam K Slater, *The Caribbean Family: Legitimacy in Martinique* (New York, St.Martin's Press 1977), 68.

are windows," Césaire often says), but one of these seas is the Caribbean – exploding sea, sea archipelago, multiracial sea; multilingual, multicultural and connecting sea – which unlike the Mediterranean – an interior sea, sea that concentrates; cradle of Western civilization, of the great monotheistic religions, of monolithic thought that projects itself onto the world. According to Glissant, this Mediterranean conception of knowledge is tied to notions of discovery and geographic conquest,... The Caribbean is "counter-Mediterranean," marooning rather than conquering.⁴¹

Towards the end of the 1800s, and the decades immediately prior to Fanon's birth, Martinique experienced two significant events. Apart from the social and economic reconfiguration that resulted from the eruption of Mount Pelée and the subsequent expansion of Fort de France as the new political and economic capital, Martinique saw a large influx of indentured workers from Africa, India and China which added to the social hierarchy. In this society, which suffered from a stubborn racial stratification, new immigrants were added to the hierarchy which became fixed in the following order: "whites (*bhekes*), mulattoes, negroes, dogs, and Indians (*coolies*)".⁴² The racial hierarchy of Martinique has forever been partly the result of a local aspiration for equality and recognition by the French and, as such, Martinicans have been unable to resolve the question of ethnic identification, whether they are part of the Caribbean or a French cultural minority. Even the traditional designation, *Antillais* or French West Indian ordinarily used to refer to Martinique and Guadeloupe was contested because of differentiation even between these two Islands. There was a resistance to being grouped together.

RELIGION AND RACE IN COLONIAL MARTINIQUE

Even the most cursory reading of the history of Martinique will reveal that education, religion and race characterized the French presence on the Island of

⁴¹ Michele Praeger, *The Imaginary Caribbean and the Caribbean Imaginary* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 88.

⁴² Mariam K. Slater, *The Caribbean Family: Legacy in Martinique*, 47.

Martinique. From as early as the introduction of the “Code Noir” which was intended to regulate the relations between slaves and masters, stipulating rights, entitlement and obligation in relations to religion, education and miscegenation, local institutions of faith communities, of learning and of legislation colluded to maintain social order. Slater argued that even though the “code noir” “placed the slave outside the province of metropolitan law, the Catholic slave was a part of the Church.”⁴³ As such Catholicism became a defining feature of Martinican national identity, and thus between 85% - 90% of the population were affiliated to the Catholic Church. Fanon himself referred to Catholicism as one of the great revealed religion, together with Islam.⁴⁴

Since the establishment of French rule, Roman Catholicism has been the predominant religion on the island although evangelical Protestantism had seen steady growth over the years, as had Bahai, Jewish, and Muslim faiths, who owned sites of religious and cultural congregation. While Catholic Christianity was the dominant religious tradition, the islanders' tolerance for religious diversity was reflected by the fact that throughout and beyond the slave era a parallel system of beliefs and practice, known as *quimbois*, had existed alongside Christianity. *Quimbois* encompassed plant and herb remedies, sorcery, and spiritual healing, and was embedded deep within popular culture.

Throughout the early chapters of her biographical novel, *Je suis martiniquaise* Mayotte Capécia conveyed a sense of the rich texture of Martinican society insofar as she offered great detail about the centrality of the Catholic Church through stories of picnics and carnivals. She conveyed her understanding of the collusion between the Church and race in her recollection of her affection for a blonde priest she tried to impress through her dedication to catechism. While the race critique of this text was questionable and some may say altogether absent, Capécia was able to show “love, poverty, and religion, blend with local

⁴³ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 128.

customs, politics, superstitions, and prejudice, in a breathtakingly beautiful tropical setting, but the mixture is not a peaceful one."⁴⁵ Jill Albada-Jelgersma argued that Mayotte Capécia was "firmly located in the landscape, culture and religion of the island, between Catholicism and Vodun" to illustrate the point that religion and culture continued to be dominant themes in the writings of Martinican novelists.⁴⁶

A version of nineteenth century Hinduism, brought to the West Indies by South Indian immigrants, survived in small temples and shrines where the burning of incense, garlanding of statues, and offering of sacrifices was still practiced. Both Hindus and *quimboiseurs* ordinarily considered themselves also to be Catholic while the local Rastafari, a sect that began in Jamaica and worshipped the late emperor, Haile Selassie, broke more squarely with Western religion. In addition to the regularly celebrated holidays (Christmas, Easter, All Saints Day, etc.) each commune (district) organized an annual celebration in the name of a saint or Catholic holiday. Thus considering Catholicism's historical presence in Martinique, Stephen D. Glazier argued that the Caribbean islands have been strongly influenced by Roman Catholicism and that it remained the dominant religion in the French Caribbean.⁴⁷ Laennec Hurbon suggested that "Christianity as the official religion has played such an all-embracing role in a society dominated by slavery that in the end it has been bound up with the creation of a new cultural identity".⁴⁸

However, identities in the region had also been informed by the development and prevalence of African diasporic religious traditions. The most influential and

⁴⁵ Mercer Cook, "Review of *Je suis martiniquaise* by Mayotte Capécia" *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Jul., 1949): 370.

⁴⁶ Jill Albada-Jelgersma, "Capécia, Mayotte" in *Encyclopedia of Latin American and Caribbean Literature: 1900-2003*, eds. Daniel Balderston and Mike Gonzalez, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 105.

⁴⁷ Stephen D. Glazier, "Pilgrimages in the Caribbean" in *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Alan Morinis (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 143.

⁴⁸ Laennec Hurbon, "New Religious Movements in the Caribbean" in *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*, 147.

most widely practiced among these were Santeria, Candomble and Vodou. Often the interest of sociologists and anthropologists studying these traditions was not to understand their contribution to the struggle for independence, but instead to view them simply in terms of how their being 'hybrids' of African and Christian traditions contributed to a uniquely Caribbean culture. These traditions have been variously referred to as Caribbean religion, Afro-American and diaspora religion. In terms of Fanon's engagement with, and views about, these traditions I will incorporate his use of the terms, *primitive*, *animist* and *creole* because he used these terms to refer to Caribbean religious traditions. Thus Fanon, like other scholars on the Caribbean followed Leiris' thesis of clash cultures in the Caribbean contact zone.⁴⁹

Of these Caribbean religious traditions, Rastafari, originating from Jamaica and *Quimbois* were the most widely followed native religious movements on the island. However, I propose to consider them alongside the other widely practiced traditions of the region in order to better understand Fanon's deliberate distancing himself from indigenous practices. In Fanon's Martinique there was a close correlation between speaking creole and the native religious practices. He recalled that at school his "teachers kept a close watch over the children to make sure they do not use creole."⁵⁰

Macey suggested that linguistically creole was a "rich mixture of French, African survivals and fragments of the European languages spoken in the eastern Caribbean by planter, traders, slaves and merchants."⁵¹ However, Fanon's ambivalence and turnabout from his earlier agreement with Leiris – that creole would die out – to assert that creole was an 'expression of Antillean consciousness' suggested that the term conveyed more than a mere reference to language. It also denoted the Caribbean underclass, *tibandes*, characterized

⁴⁹ Mary Louis Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6.

⁵⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 28.

⁵¹ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 60-61.

by the cultural and religious practices that set them apart from those who regarded themselves as French, and finally it embraced a primordial link that privileged Africa, instead of Europe.

Fanon recalled De Pedrals' suggestion in *La vie sexuelle en Afrique noire* that regardless of what field of African society was studied, which presumably included societies influenced by African survivals, he argued that it would always have a certain magico-social structure. Fanon then clarified the extent to which his upbringing on the island shaped his perception of native religious movements. Although there was a great deal of diversity among the native religious traditions of the Caribbean - such as vodou (in Haiti), Santeria (in Cuba), Shango (in Trinidad), Obeahism (in Jamaica) and Candomble (in Brazil) – these traditions shared a strong symbolic and historical link with Africa. These traditions, dedicated to spirit, according to various rites and practices provided an “underground system of symbols and images which keep a constant distance from the dominant western culture and values”⁵²

Hurbon argued that, despite a nineteenth century campaign to depict these traditions as the focal point of magic, witchcraft and even cannibalism,⁵³ African elements continued to be alive and easily found in native religions in the French Antilles. Sean Hand, in his text on Leiris, suggested that during this period “voodoo ritual, American jazz and, above all, negroes formed an exotic fetish in all the arts. As early as 1916 the Dadaists performed a violent, rhythmic ‘Negro’ chant as part of a general attempt to sabotage ‘civilization’ with the flippant scandal of ‘savagery’.”⁵⁴ From Fanon’s response to negritude, it seemed that negritude’s nostalgia for pre-modern forms left Fanon uneasy and this led him to refer to this intellectual movement as a “sheet of water that threatens my soul of

⁵² Laennec Hurbon, “New Religious Movements in the Caribbean,” 149.

⁵³ Ibid., 173 n.2; Hurbon cites a reference in the newspaper *La Nacion* wherein an article referred to Haiti as the “Rome of black magic in America” (quoted in Martinez, 1981, 106.)

⁵⁴ Sean Hand, *Leiris: Writing the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46.

fire."⁵⁵

While elsewhere Fanon wrote that he was relieved that he was not introduced to "negroes" from reading Levy-Bruhl,⁵⁶ here he used the term "primitive mentality" as he spoke of native religions as black magic, witches Sabbaths, heathen ceremonies and animism.⁵⁷ Considering his hypothesis that blacks engaged the world quite differently, and his anti-colonial use of the body as an instrument of sacred violence, it was quite paradoxical that Fanon chose to draw on the native religions' celebration of the body as repository of its collective history. Thus we find that in Fanon's Martinique the denial and exclusion of creole or diasporic religion produced new sites of knowledge production around which racial identities were fashioned and contested. Macey suggested that the denial of creole represented an erasure of the Martinican people's black and African origins, and creole "seemed to be the ignominious stigma of those origins."⁵⁸ Fanon's Antillean experience of native Caribbean religions coupled with his reading of French sociology and anthropology had an enduring effect on his conception of religion in the postcolony.

Race stratification represented another key feature of national identity at the time of Fanon's youth. Generally organized in terms of genealogical and structural conceptions of race, and although the categories were not strictly fixed, the society broadly consisted of the *bekes*, the mulattoes, and the *noir*. The *bekes* were the white minority population of Martinique, who were descendant of one of the original white settlers - it was also used to refer to a white creole born in the Caribbean. They represent the landed gentry or economic aristocracy, who by 1938 owned 75% of the land (plantations) and controlled 85% of exports.⁵⁹ In addition to their monopoly of the plantation economy and

⁵⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 126.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 199.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 126.

⁵⁸ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 62.

⁵⁹ Mariam Slater, *The Caribbean Family: Legitimacy in Martinique*, 59.

exports, the *beke* also jealously guarded their racial purity. Thus, while they would interact with mulattoes and blacks in the work place, they were reluctant to share social engagements with mulattoes or blacks. Inter-marriage between a *beke* and someone of another race were unthinkable, and would result in automatic expulsion from the clan, regardless of class status.⁶⁰

The groups that comprised the majority of the wealthy middleclass were the mulatto who were the descendants of free slaves and were of mixed-race parentage. Slater observed that for Martinicans if someone "is behaviourally black he is not a member of the *mulatre* group, although he can be called *mulatre* in a descriptive sense."⁶¹ Curiously the prestige associated with being mulatto was that they didn't reflect customs of nineteenth century aristocracy, as is often assumed, it emerged from the fact that they emulated the values of their peers in metropolitan France. Slater suggested, that like in other colonies, there were indeed 'white' and 'native' cultures in Martinique, except that paradoxically the pattern in Martinique was reversed. The mulattoes were behaviourally white, while the *beke* culture was uniquely Martinican and as such could be called 'native'. The mulatto was the educated class (*bourgeoisie*) and they represented the most upwardly mobile section of the society. The *beke* appeared to only want to ensure their status as an exclusive aristocratic upper-class from an earlier period, while the blacks or *noir* were trapped in a state of disempowered citizenship.

Blacks, at 70%, were the largest section of the population. By the racial stratification of Martinique this group comprised those who were phenotypically black but also those who were behaviourally and culturally black and as such this could also include the poor mulatto. During Fanon's youth most blacks earned their living through agricultural work on large plantations and/or through a meager income from subsistence farming. A significant number from among

⁶⁰ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 46.

⁶¹ Mariam Slater, *The Caribbean Family: Legitimacy in Martinique*, 60.

the black population had little to no social mobility and no chance of ever owning land. Many generated their income from fishing. Although among the blacks of the island one could find upwardly mobile shopkeepers or rural government officials, this group made up a largely rural underclass that happened to be associationally and culturally black. The urban-rural divide remained a significant factor in Martinique. While there was a greater public association between the groups in a rural context, this relationship was tolerated only in formal or professional relations.

Mariam Slater suggested that religious life was one of those sites where all groups would mix, although not in exclusive gatherings related to rites of passage.⁶² She concluded that while Martinique before World War II may have been social and racially regulated, that “the mulatre judge can explain the African stories that the lower class tell at wakes. The doctor can play African drum rhythms. Planters are more comfortable when speaking creole. Persons of all strata tend to believe equally in séances.”⁶³ This showed that there was in fact greater social contact and exchange between people from across the social spectrum in Martinique.

Martinicans had produced a social context that gave simultaneous meaning to the internal racial stratification of the island without disrupting its relation to the French metropole. Sally Price pointed to that fact that, even today, culture in these Antillean settings “takes on the bright colors of a madras head scarf, the gently danceable rhythms of a mazouk, the smooth, creamy texture of a breadfruit *migan*, the intoxicating aromas of canefields and rum, the gravelly voice of a barefoot *conteur*, and the lilting cadences of a market woman’s Creole.”⁶⁴ Fanon argued that “Martinicans are greedy for security. They want to

⁶² Ibid., 63.

⁶³ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁴ Sally Price, “Michel Leris, French Anthropology and a Side Trip to the Antilles”, *French Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol.22, Issue 1 (2004): 23-35.

compel the acceptance of their fiction."⁶⁵ It was widely agreed that Martinicans had maintained a paradoxical relationship with France and William Miles has suggested that as a result "cultural assimilation of the colonies proceeded less erratically than the political one, for French education and language permeated the French West Indies to the exclusion of all other elements. Martinicans were especially chosen in later years to occupy positions of authority in France's colonies and rule of her African empire."⁶⁶ Fanon argued that most Antillean children, if asked to write a composition about what they imagined a vacation would be like, would respond like 'real little Parisians' and produce such lines as: "I like vacation because then I can run through the fields, breathe fresh air, and come home with rosy cheeks."⁶⁷ In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon highlighted the extent of assimilation through education when he wrote that:

the black schoolboy in the Antilles, who in his lesson are forever talking about "our ancestors, the Gauls," identifies himself with the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries the truth to savages – an all-white truth.⁶⁸

Fanon suggested that as a result of this education young Martinicans eventually exhibited a conception of themselves as essentially white.⁶⁹ Macey argued that even though education was the most significant means of upward mobility in Martinique, children were seldom taught local history except for the intervention of a particularly committed teacher - who tended to rely on a Francocentric chronology anyway.⁷⁰ Later in *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon recalled that, even at home, his mother only sang love songs that never mentioned black people or the Antilles thus reinforcing French values and language as normative. For Fanon "the black Antillean is a slave of this cultural imposition. After being a slave for

⁶⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 212.

⁶⁶ William Miles, *Elections and Ethnicity in French Martinique*, 41.

⁶⁷ Fanon, *Black Skin, Whites Masks*, 162. n.25.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁷⁰ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 36.

the white man, he enslaves himself."⁷¹

In his essay "negro and psychopathology" Fanon suggested that this socio-cultural education extended to the Antillean child's enjoyment of popular magazines. He drew attention to the fact that in these magazines the "the wolf, the devil, the evil spirit, the bad man, the savage are always symbolized by negroes or Indians".⁷² The theme of education will be given a greater treatment in the next section where I consider Joseph Zobel's *La Rue des cases-nègres*, a novel and film about education as alienation. Fanon believed that assimilation introduced through the schooling system continued into adulthood when young adults between twenty and thirty "steep themselves in Montesque or Claudel for the sole purpose of being able to quote them. That is because, through their knowledge of these writers, they expect their color to be forgotten."⁷³ Fanon aptly summed up the condition of assimilation in the Antilles when he wrote of the essence of the black Antillean's desire:

I am a Frenchman. I am interested in French culture, French civilization, French people. We refuse to be considered "outsiders," we have full part in the French drama.⁷⁴

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF CHILDHOOD

What emerges from a consideration of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier* and Euzhan Palcy's film adaptation of Joseph Zobel's *Rue cases negres* is the realization that regardless of the noble or sinister intent of the policy of assimilation, the conditions under which the people of Martinique lived were appalling. It produced not only dire socio-economic conditions but a conception of self as

⁷¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 192.

⁷² Frantz Fanon, "The Negro and Psychopathology" in *Literary Theory*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 464.

⁷³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 193.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

alienated. In "A Poetic of Anticolonialism," his Introduction to Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, Robin D.G. Kelly argued that the policy of assimilation was one that resulted in "the reinvention of the colonized, (and) the deliberate destruction of the past". We witnessed characters depicted in the book and the film that were not yet European but no longer African. Thus they had entered a liminal space, the domain of the colonial petty bureaucrats. Herein, Martinique was not the island of the European imagination, that place of exoticism, burgeoning with promise, abundant with natural resources and fertile ground for the production of sugar and coffee, but rather the place Césaire wrote about at the very opening to *Cahier* as follows:

at the end of early dawn, burgeoning with frail bays, the starved Antilles, the Antilles pockmarked with smallpox, the Antilles dynamites with alcohol, run aground in the mud of the bay, in the dust of the town inauspiciously grounded.⁷⁵

For Césaire, Martinique had become economically destitute and socially corrupt only to serve the insatiable demand for black labour power. The dire socio-economic conditions were skillfully reflected by the living environment of the plantation workers depicted in Palcy's 1983 film *Rue cases negres* (Sugar Cane Alley) - conditions reminiscent of slavery. The desperation was also captured by the mood of the characters as they displayed a sense of defeat and resignation at their socio-political circumstances. This book and film, respectively forced the viewer and reader to confront a Martinique - far from the centres of metropolitan power and sensibility - "a site of misery (here in the form of hunger, disease, alcoholism and despair)... a site of a culture 'run aground' and floundering in the mud".⁷⁶ This was the Martinique of Fanon's childhood and youth, at the time of the Vichy occupation, a particularly repressive period captured by Andre Breton *Martinique: Snake Charmer*.

⁷⁵ Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of Return to Native Land*, trans. Mireille Rosello with Annie Pritchard (Tarset, Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 1995), 73.

⁷⁶ Gregson Davis, *Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), 25.

However, Césaire argued in his *Discourse on Colonialism* that the repressive measures so brutally implemented by the Vichy administration, were really an expression of a longer French tradition. He pointed to the fact that even the progressive Ernest Renan argued for the separation of the races. Renan argued that, by essence, Europeans were soldiers and masters while the Chinese were known for manual dexterity and that blacks were tillers of the earth. While on the one hand he argued that blacks should be treated with fairness and kindness, he suggested that if "each one does what he is made for, all will be well". It would be too easy to reduce the discourse of repression to a particular moment of Martinican history such as the occupation by the Vichy administration but rather, I argue that it has to be understood as part of a longer history of French thinking supported by intellectual and religious leaders alike.⁷⁷ The impact of the occupation nonetheless left a lasting impression on the young Fanon and it certainly ignited his political passions.

During his very short stay on the island, Andre Breton, the American surrealist and political dissident, underwent a wide range of experiences starting with his short stint in the local detention centre. He wrote that "despite appalling poverty, widespread illiteracy and an oppressive political-economic regime, the author of the *Communicating Vessels* discovered not only an astounding natural beauty but also... a vibrant and dynamic outpost of true poetry and far-reaching revolutionary thought."⁷⁸ Breton found an island that was run like a police state, sympathetic to the Vichy government, and under the administration of Admiral Robert. Although captivated by the infinite beauty and magic of tropical nature in "troubled waters" he (Breton) "proclaims his outrage against the greed, corruption and injustice of the island's leaders."⁷⁹ Breton captured his

⁷⁷ Aimé Césaire, "Discourse on Colonialism" (selected excerpts) in *Nations and Identity*, ed. Vincent P. Pecora (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001), 255-257.

⁷⁸ Andre Breton, *The Snake Charmer*, trans. David W. Seaman (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2008), 7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

experiences later in the book and it echoed the mood on the island that Fanon alluded to in *Black Skin, White Masks*.

He recalled how immediately upon his arrival, after appreciating the beauty of this transit stop, “border officers burst onto the scene, quickly spreading anxiety. About ten physically intimidating-looking individuals in lightweight khaki uniforms, bear-legged and bearing revolvers, the brims of their caps not concealing their hostile looks, took over the officers’ cabin.”⁸⁰ Despite his experience of the island as this beautiful place, Breton, found that during his early days, people more familiar with the island generally referred to it in negative terms. First, the ship’s captain referred to Martinique as “the shame of France”⁸¹ and later a police lieutenant remarked “Off to Pointe-Rouge. You are in Martinique, *where anything goes*” with the implication it was a place of corruption, with no regard for the law.⁸²

He went on to suggest that anyone who was sympathetic to the great misery of the people and asked too many questions was in fact taking their life into their hands.⁸³ Breton’s arrival in Martinique was a consequence of the broader political changes in France – a result of the Nazi occupation of metropolitan France. Soon the repressive measures of the Vichy government had reached the shores of the Caribbean Island. It was the suffocating conditions of the highly policed Fort de France that made the ‘discovery’ of Césaire so profound for Breton, such that he described him as “that first fresh, revitalizing breathe of air”⁸⁴and his writing as “beautiful as nascent oxygen”.⁸⁵ He wrote of Césaire:

it is a black man who is the one guiding us today into the unexplored, seeming to play as he goes, throwing ignition switches

⁸⁰ Ibid., 67.

⁸¹ Ibid., 67.

⁸² Ibid., 68.

⁸³ Ibid., 79.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 88.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 94.

that lead us forward from spark to spark. And it is a black man who, not only for blacks but for all mankind, expresses the questions, all the anguish, all the hopes and all the ecstasy and who becomes more and more crucial as the supreme example of dignity.⁸⁶

Before a consideration of the significance of Fort de France as the site of Fanon's early political awareness, I will consider Euzhan Palcy's "Sugar Cane Alley" as a reflection of the conditions of Martinique, dealing with the same period as Fanon's childhood. "Sugar cane Alley" is a filmic adaptation of Joseph Zobel's novel, *La rue cases negres* (translated, by Keith Warner, into English under the title "Black Shack Alley"). It is a tale about growing up black, poor, proud and fiercely ambitious on the French West Indian island of Martinique in the early 1930's – documenting the early life of Jose, a talented young black boy who lived with his grandmother. Frederick Ivor Case argued that Zobel's narrative voice was authentic and credible in its treatment of the social devastation of the island.⁸⁷ The film opens with what looks like a series of sepia-saturated, picture-postcard views of Martinique as it was in the 1930's and, to a certain extent, as it still is today, once you leave the protective, insistently pleasure-bent holiday resorts.⁸⁸ Though Ms. Palcy presents us with a talented and ambitious young Jose, who we observe going to school where he excels, his real education does not come from school but rather from his observations of the world around him and the relationships he maintains in that world. Each of the characters represents a condition of the Martinican pathology, as articulated by Césaire, and later by Frantz Fanon.

One such character is M'mam Tine, a tough pipe-smoking old woman who raises the orphaned Jose on the sugar cane plantation where she has been a cane cutter all her life. The early sequences of the movie appear to focus on the

⁸⁶ Ibid., 88.

⁸⁷ Frederick Ivor Case, "Novels of Social and Political Protests to the 1950s" in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: Hispanic and Francophone Regions*, eds. Albert Arnold James, Julio Rodriguez-Luis and Michael J. Dash (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994), 421-422.

⁸⁸ Vincent Canby, "Third World truths from Sugar cane Alley" (Review) *NY Times*, 22 April 1984.

general conditions of life on the plantations, with M'mam Tine representing the long suffering conditions of the plantation's shack dweller, who perpetually live a life of debt. While the image of M'mam Tine has strong resonances with the Ma Ninotte of Patrick Chamoiseau's *Childhood* and the Singer-machine sewing mother in Césaire's *Notebook*, here these scenes hint particularly heavily at the history of slavery and its exploitation of women and children. With the introduction of Medouze, who dreams of an African homeland he never knew, the link with the middle passage is made explicit and the political subtext of slavery becomes coupled with the trajectory of Jose's life.

Medouze, the older black man in the settlement, represents the symbolic link with Africa and he encapsulates the religious and cultural survivals. Kevin Yelvington in his article on the invention of Africa in the Caribbean argued that these survivals "would typically include cultural practices conceived of as cultural traits associated with religion, but they were also evinced in folklore and language."⁸⁹ Medouze imparts to Jose lessons about his black heritage and identity, and he cautions Jose not to be deceived by the ideals of abolition, since in his view, the masters have simply been replaced by bosses, but that the conditions of enslavement have remained the same. In Zobel's novel we get a sense of the kind of relationships Palcy was trying to convey as well as the origins of some of the sub-themes. In *Black Shack Alley*, Jose listens to tales that Medouze learned from his father when he was little, in the book Medouze recalls his own father's words:

I was a young boy like you, Medouze. All the blacks came down from the hills with sticks, machetes, guns, and torches. They invaded the town of St. Pierre. They burned all the homes. For the first time, blacks saw whites shake with fear, lock themselves in their mansions and die. That was how slavery ended [...].⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Kevin A Yelvington, "The Invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean", in *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*, ed. Kevin A Yelvington (Santa Fe: School of America Research Press, 2006), 53.

⁹⁰ Joseph Zobel, *Black Shack Alley*, (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1980), 32-33.

After slavery, the master had become the boss [. . .] Nothing has changed, son. The whites own all the land. The law forbids their beating us, but it doesn't force them to pay us a decent wage.⁹¹

Robert Bernard argued that it was Medouze “who keeps the racial memory of the youngsters alive by telling them tales about the prowess of their ancestors in Africa.”⁹² I imagine that when trying to give expression to this aspect of black history on the island, Palcy would have been acutely aware of Frantz Fanon's remark that “colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future... By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it.”⁹³ Thus Medouze represented a counter-narrative to the strong assimilationist current of the period.

In contrast to Medouze, Leopold, Jose's mulatto school mate, and Carmen, the young man who introduced Jose to cosmopolitanism of Fort de France, were tragic characters insofar as they both fell victim to the racial politics of the island. Each in his own way was seduced by the promise and prospect of full French citizenship, an ever elusive promise for the ‘black’ Martinicans, a tragedy that Palcy's film conveys skillfully. Two sets of filmic sequences that particularly struck me were the ones about the fire in the shanty settlement, and Jose's trip to do his lycee scholarship exams. Separately they represent the Martinicans' range of life choices: labour or education, enslavement or assimilation.

The idle children get drunk and set fire to their shanty settlement and Palcy captures the insanity of the moment in the representation of the children as young savages – who appear at a glance to be worshipping the fire with little or

⁹¹ Ibid., 33.

⁹² Robert W Bernard, “Joseph Zobel's Autobiographical Novel *Black Shack Alley*: Education as a catalyst against the Politics of Colonial Oppression,” *Vitae Scholasticae* (Spring 2004): 63-70.

⁹³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 169.

no understanding of the consequences. Palcy paused this scene as if to convey a sense that the children are trapped in a trance by this fiery force of nature. To a degree it is suggestive of the representation of the 'blacks' of the island as savages who practice "primitive religion". Robert Bernard suggested that "primitive religion" was an intimate part of everyday life, in celebration or disaster because on the island "African voodoo, zombies and other forms of supernatural possession exist side by side with the colonial religion of Catholicism."⁹⁴

Ultimately this scene demonstrates how the everyday was informed by a history of representation of the 'black' other in order to provide colonial justification for child labour and further enslavement of their parents. Palcy was able to illustrate how the most mundane native transgressions were blown out of proportion as a means of justifying exploitation and ultimately to extract productive power from the workers, whether it was to employ children or to extend working hours. Of course the dire conditions of the settlement resulted in the death of Medouze, who died quietly, exhausted and alone.

But the death of Medouze, also marked the symbolic death of a link with Africa, and brought about a decision by M'man Tine to send Jose to school in Forte de France. Zobel alerted us to the success of Medouze's teaching on the young Jose when he wrote:

I had finally understood that Médouze had died from fatigue, that it was the stalks of cane, the clumps of Guinea grass, the sheaves, the storms, the sunstrokes which, once evening had fallen, had struck him down. Now it was M'man Tine's turn to undergo all of that: sun, storms, weeds, cane, stalks, cane leaves.⁹⁵

In the second significant sequence, Jose is offered a scholarship to attend

⁹⁴ Robert W Bernard, "Joseph Zobel's Autobiographical Novel *Black Shack Alley*: Education as a catalyst against the Politics of Colonial Oppression," *Vitae Scholasticae* (Spring 2004): 63-70.

⁹⁵ Joseph Zobel, *Black Shack Alley* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1980), 77.

college in Fort de France and, together with the old woman, he resettles in the city. This decision marks a transformation and the viewer is introduced to the marked differences between life in the city and life on the plantations. However, conditions of exploitation prevail everywhere, as M'mam Tine continues a life of arduously long hours labouring as a washer woman. Jose also has to deal with the fact that, as a black boy, his admission to the college is always vulnerable to suspension should he not conform or perform. There is a striking moment when Jose's class teacher asserts "education! the second door to our freedom". This not only captures the prevailing belief among poor and middle class Martinicans at the time, but also showed education as being at the heart of French assimilationist policies for the Island.

In *Sugar Cane Alley* Martinicans were confronted by a series of impossible choices, to labour in the sugar cane plantations, to die dreaming of an African motherland they do not know, or to become assimilated into French culture. Palcy, in *Sugar cane Alley* captured the complexity of the social and cultural issues at the time, when Fanon who experienced a very different Martinique from Zobel's Jose, was a young man - also at a time when France sought to consolidate its power in the region. For Zobel's young Jose, relinquishing his creole culture was a prerequisite for social mobility, whereas Fanon who regarded himself as French first and foremost, voluntarily 'bracketed off' anything that spoke of his creoleness. Maryse Conde in an interview with Françoise Pfaff remarked that back "in those days, blacks obeyed the famous Victor Schoelcher dictate: "hard work will make people forget your African ancestors.""⁹⁶ Hassenah Ebrahim argued that although Palcy minimized an acceptance of cultural assimilation as the path to liberation from the cane fields by enhancing the role of Medouze as the guardian of popular memory, Joseph

⁹⁶ Françoise Pfaff and Maryse Conde, *Conversations with Maryse Conde* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 70.

Zobel's fictional world was ultimately based on assimilation.⁹⁷

FANON'S FORTE DE FRANCE

For much of the twentieth century, Forte de France served as the cosmopolitan hub of the Island, where Martinicans interacted with travelers, merchants and political administrators from metropolitan France. Some argued that a third of the nation's population converged on this city daily, a sentiment which was partly conveyed in Euzhan Palcy's "Sugar Cane Alley". Commenting on the ethnic and ethno-nationalism in the Caribbean, William Miles argued that Martinican culture included "the phenomenon of Euro-West Indian segmentary creole cultures (which were local variations on European cultural themes, and reflected current political, economic, educational and legal institutions) as well as that of Afro-West Indian segmentary creole cultures (which were based on surviving African peasant cultures, and were manifested in language, music, dance, theatre, art and literature)."⁹⁸ He further held that among the mulatto there remained a strong cultural and political identification with France, and coupled with the Martinican inclination to accept metropolitan sovereignty in exchange for political stability and economic survival, this political configuration produced a muted dissatisfaction within the general population.

However, since late colonialism, many Martinicans have regarded their access to France's workforce and educational system as a chance for upward mobility. This was the social and familial context of mulatto privilege that Fanon grew up in. While some have argued that Fanon's work was no more than a black bourgeois critique by someone who had aspirations to be like the colonists, others have argued that it was precisely his life of privilege in an imagined

⁹⁷ Hassenah Ebrahim, "Sugar Cane Alley: Re-reading Race, Class and Identity in Zobel's *La rue cases negres*." *Literature Film Quarterly* 30.2 (2002): 146-155.

⁹⁸ William Miles, *Elections and Ethnicity in French Martinique, 196-170*.

community that made his work all the more radical.

Fanon's family belonged to a very small 'black' middle class that were sufficiently well-off to be able to afford to send him to the local *lycee*, an opportunity that was only available to 4% of black children at the time. As a result of his parent's social standing and the strict class stratification of the society, Fanon was for a long time sheltered from the horrors of life on the island. Fanon was among the "sons of modest civil servants or small shopkeepers" that Zobel believed were able to get grants for further study."⁹⁹

Where the earlier section of this chapter addressed the destitute conditions of the island as captured by narratives of childhood in the works of Césaire, Zobel and Chamoiseau, we find that in Fanon's Antillean text, *Black Skin, White Masks*, a rather romanticized or at best sheltered view of his childhood. The school boy in *Peau Noir* was confidently assimilating where Zobel's young Jose found himself under constant surveillance, under suspicion and at risk of being exploited or expelled. Zobel's Jose lived under the threat of being thrust back into the plantation economy and as such was constantly reminded of the privilege of his access to education, a precious commodity.

In fact, the only time that Fanon revealed any knowledge of the child-labour in the plantations of Martinique was when he wrote about "the lives of the eight year old children who labor in the cane fields of Martinique or Guadelope" and this occurred only at the end of *Peau Noir* and even then he wrote about it with the detachment of some distant outsider.¹⁰⁰ For Fanon the experience of the children in the cane fields of Martinique was no closer to his reality than he was to the workers in Abidjan or the Viet-Mihn soldier in Vietnam. Finally, as was evident from his reading Maran's narrative about Jean Veneuse's school days, Fanon understood that like in all other French colonies, his education was

⁹⁹ Joseph Zobel, *La Rue cases-negres* (Paris and Dakar: Presence africaine, 1984), 287.

¹⁰⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 230.

pursued or encouraged "in the hope of making real Frenchmen of them and transplanting them to France early"¹⁰¹

Growing up in 'metropolitan Fort de France' Fanon wrote of a childhood of uninterrupted schooling where he not only read about his Gaul ancestors but also read stories that depicted the Senegalese, as savages. He recalled that "as a schoolboy, I had many occasions to spend whole hours talking about the supposed customs of the savage Senegalese."¹⁰² Madeleine Cottenet-Hage and Kevin Meehan in their poignant article on colonial schooling in Martinique highlighted the fact that for Fanon and other young Martinicans "school is the place where young colonized subjects face the difficult challenge of integrating western knowledge and values with indigenous or "creolizing" knowledge and cultural values transmitted by another school, that of nature and familial/ancestral traditions."¹⁰³ In his writing Fanon revisited an incident when he was fourteen years old and spending time with a friend whose father was Italian and mother Martinican. The boys talked about the war and Fanon embarrassed himself by exclaiming his joy at the Allies victory over the Italians. However, while Fanon was embarrassed by his uncritical association with the French or the Allies, as a result of what he calls cultural imposition, he seemed quite uncritical of the irony of his and his mixed race friend's own elevated and segregated status within their own society.¹⁰⁴

Fanon's home life was relatively peaceful and stable. Such were the conditions at home that Fanon reminisced about being home with his mother while she sang French love songs for him. Fanon followed it up immediately with a recollection of the strict policing of the social and meaning-making

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 74.

¹⁰² Ibid., 148.

¹⁰³ Madeleine Cottenet-Hage and Kevin Meehan, "'Our Ancestors the Gauls...': Schools and Schooling in Two Caribbean Novels," *Callaloo*, Vol. 15, No. 1, The Literature of Guadeloupe and Martinique (Winter, 1992): 75-89.

¹⁰⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 194-195.

boundaries.¹⁰⁵ When he disobeyed his parents he was told not to act like a “nigger” and by extension, “primitive savage”. In such a racially stratified society this kind of labeling represented a form of casting out from the clan, and consequently the family – something every child dreaded. At an early age every Martinican child learned that they should master the French language or risk being “told by their mothers that they were *tibandes* or no better than the children who worked in the cane fields.¹⁰⁶ Silvermann pointed out the irony that when the mother scolded her child for using creole she herself used a creole term; *tibandes* (petit bandes) “were the ‘little gangs’ of children who worked in the cane fields, clearing up the pieces of cane missed by the women (‘amarruses’) who tied them into neat bundles.”¹⁰⁷

Elsewhere Fanon conveyed a sense of familial intimacy similar to his mother singing loves songs to him. He recalled how at the age of thirteen when Senegalese soldier transited on the Island, he and his siblings were curious about the soldier’s uniforms, particularly the red scarves and belts. He wrote that: his father went through quite some trouble to invite two soldiers to the family home and Fanon was intrigued by the men “whom he (Fanon Sr.) had brought home and who had the family in raptures.”¹⁰⁸ In this context Fanon replicated the imperial gaze, not very unlike his white counterparts. What was clear from all Fanon’s texts was that for Martinicans, the Senegalese were consistently viewed with intrigue and terror. It was as if the military uniforms functioned to set them apart¹⁰⁹ but it also served to contain the terrifying and violent savage.

The young Fanon also had the freedom to explore the fast expanding Forte de France. During the same period, and in the hope of catching a glimpse of the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 191.

¹⁰⁶ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 61.

¹⁰⁷ David Macey, ‘Adieu foulard, Adieu Madras’, in *Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks*, ed. Maxim Silvermann (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 18.

¹⁰⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 163. n.25

¹⁰⁹ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 93.

much feared Senegalese soldiers, he wrote of scouring the streets. Likewise when he could not contain his curiosity about his very dark Guadeloupian examiner, he had the freedom to sneak away to the hotel “simply in order to see Monsieur B.”¹¹⁰

Fanon was born into a period of recovery and expansion for Forte de France, which was the result of the devastating fire of 1890 and the eruption of Mount Pelee in 1902. Macey wrote about how, Forte de France, the former administrative capital became the social and cultural capital for the island. The city was being rebuilt on a pattern of narrow streets flanked by two and three storey houses and by the time of Fanon's adolescence the associational institutions on the island, such as libraries were already modeled on their metropolitan equivalents.¹¹¹ Macey suggested that while the Forte de France of Fanon's childhood was new, it was not modern and that the reality of extreme rural poverty was never far away. Unlike Césaire and Chamoiseau, who explicitly addressed the poverty of the island, at least in terms of the shacks or dilapidated houses of their childhood, Fanon only addressed the issue of child labour and poverty at the end *Peau noire*. Fanon did not grow up in a shack and his family, though out of necessity, could nonetheless afford home assistants, in fact, they were able to acquire a second home which reflected their contemporary prosperity.¹¹²

Fanon recalled the social aspect of his youth such as when his fellow school friends would immediately after school gather informally on the Savannah, an open space that contrasted the tight, narrow streets. Fanon acknowledged, with some cynicism, that the social performance of the Savannah encapsulated a public space where the socio-racial and gender hierarchies of the island were

¹¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 163-164. n.25

¹¹¹ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 51-52.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 55.

enforced and reinforced on a daily basis.¹¹³ Evidently these exchanges involved all aspects of social assimilation and camouflage for those who wished to be more French. Apart from the issue of language, which he addressed in this passage, Fanon, in another passage, recalled how “during the time I was slowly being jolted alive into puberty, I had the honor of being able to look in wonder on one of my older friends who had just come back from France and who had held a Parisian girl in his arms.”¹¹⁴ Macey suggested that as Fanon entered adolescence he began to spend more time in the town library, a pursuit of French classicism that began at a young age and was reinforced at home.¹¹⁵

Fanon wrote very little about his school days - but scholars have here collated fragments from his texts, together with the works of Zobel, Glissant and Chamoiseau to make some general inferences about the conditions of his childhood. That having been said, Fanon did capture something of the social and psychic complexities of the Martinican childhood, when he cited Leon Damas' *Hoquet* (hiccups) from the anthology, *Pigments*:

My mother wanting son to keep in mind
if you do not know your history lesson
you will not go to mass on Sunday in
your Sunday clothes
that child will be a disgrace to his family
that child will be our curse
shut up I told you you must speak French
the French of France
the Frenchman's French
French French¹¹⁶

The outbreak of the World War II changed life on the island as trenches were dug on the Savannah, school was closed and Fanon, together with his older brother, were sent away to stay with their uncle in a small town where the school was still

¹¹³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 24.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹¹⁵ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 60.

¹¹⁶ Leon Damas, “Hoquet” cited in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 20.

functioning. It would be a year later, upon his return to Fort de France that Fanon came into contact with Césaire. This period would change Fanon's life, as it did for the rest of Martinique. It was clear from his essay, "West Indians and Africans" that the war was hugely disruptive for Fanon because in it he delineates the island history in terms of time 'before the war' and 'after the war'. He wrote about the earlier period and asserted that "before 1939, the West Indian claimed to be happy, or at least thought himself as being so. He voted, went to school, when he could he took part in processions, liked rum and danced the beguine. Those who were privileged to go to France spoke of Paris, which meant France. And those who were not privileged to know Paris let themselves be beguiled."¹¹⁷

He was on the one hand inspired by Césaire's negritude, promoting the idea that "it was good to be a Negro" while on the other being appalled by the racism of the French sailors and the economic suffering that resulted from their preferential treatment.¹¹⁸ He concluded that until that moment in the island's history the mulatto's and the blacks lived, thought and dreamed as if in a kind of delirium in pursuit of Frenchness, in pursuit of whiteness until they (Martinicans) shrugged off the great white error to live in the great black mirage.¹¹⁹ For much of his life Fanon maintained an ambivalent relationship with Martinique, the site of his coming to political awareness under the tutelage of Aimé Césaire but the island nation also proved to be too provincial and assimilated for the more radical Fanon. Macey remarked that Fanon had a rather unexceptional childhood by Martinican standards, except that he enjoyed middleclass privileges. However, Memmi concluded that this meant that Fanon was frustrated by "an unattainable identification with Martinique"¹²⁰ and that he ultimately felt betrayed by its departmentalization.

¹¹⁷ Azzedine Haddour, *The Fanon Reader: Frantz Fanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 150-151.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹²⁰ Albert Memmi, "The Impossible Life of Frantz Fanon," *Massachusetts Review* (winter 1973): 9-39.

In the end it seemed that while Martinique was for Fanon a place of care-free, and single-minded pursuit of his Frenchness, it was also a place of denial, where Fanon lived a reality quite apart from 'the lived experience of the black'. Through the expulsion of 'creole' from public life Martinicans had hoped to contain the supposedly uncivilized savage within. Thus Martinique was also a place where Fanon and his Antillean contemporaries saw their identities shaped, not only through mimicking the French language, values and religion but also by their fear of being overwhelmed by the persistence of "primitive religion" that at times must have seemed so tangibly present in their everyday interactions.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER FOUR

ENGAGEMENTS WITH CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM AND INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS

Fanon was widely acknowledged as adhering to a rational, humanist modernity. He privileged rationalism and modernity as the foundation blocks for the emergence of the 'new man' and the postcolonial nation. Having established in the previous two chapters that Fanon's intellectual and socio-political identities were defined, not simply by an initial seduction and subsequent rejection of French metropolitan values, but also significantly by the expulsion from public life of those traditions, values and practices regarded as creole and indigenous. It is therefore not surprising that Fanon considered religion as essentially pre-modern and irrational, as a force that distracted the masses from realizing the dire state of their material conditions. Although he saw religion as essentially pre-modern and irrational, he had an ambivalence towards religion that appeared throughout his work. He didn't denounce religion wholesale, nor did he uphold it, and thus he struggled to ascertain the place for religious tradition and customs in the anti-colonial struggle.

Talal Asad has argued that historically religion and religious conversion was thought of as irrational because "it happens to people rather than being something that they choose to become after careful thought. And yet most individuals enter modernity rather as converts to a new religion – as a consequence of forces beyond their control... it annihilates old possibilities and puts others in their place."¹ Fanon privileged so-called "world religions" over "primitive religion", a prejudice that, as Russel McCutcheon, and more recently, Tomoko Mazusawa insisted, continues to frame ways of thinking and speaking about religion.²

¹ Talal Asad, "Comments on Conversion" in *Conversion to Modernities*, ed. Peter van der Veer (New York: Routledge, 1996), 263.

² Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics not Caretakers* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001), 22.; see also Tomoko Mazusawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

Fanon argued that because of custom, habit and tradition the native realized that the Christian, Catholic "God is not on his side".³ By differentiating between indigenous traditions as primitive and Catholicism and Islam as the great revealed religions, or "world religions" Fanon purported a view of religion that was reminiscent of E.B. Tylor's notion that although we may distinguish between "primitive" and modern cultures, religion is present in all cultures. Of course, for Tylor, perhaps like Fanon, religion was an unwarranted survival from the pre-modern that should have disappeared. Unlike Durkheim, who saw religion as the deification of society and its structure, Tylor saw "primitive religion" as characterized preeminently by a belief in magic and unseen forces or powers. His theory of animism has been called rationalist and intellectual because for him religion was an attempt to account for what happens in the world. However, Fanon's attempt to explain the order of society lends itself more to a Durkheimian explanation of religion. It was not so much that Fanon's idea of religion evolved in a particular direction over time, rather it reflected the diversity of his engagements with religion. He variously critiqued the perspectives and interests in religion exhibited by colonialists, the national bourgeoisie, the colonized and the native intellectual as he sought to resolve the matter of religion and tradition in the anti-colonial struggle.

Fanon would have been drawn to the fact that Durkheim saw religion as a projection of the social values of a society. He was less concerned with origins and more with how religion functioned to produce the collective consciousness of the social group. It was precisely this way in which religion and tradition captivated and held the interest of the colonized that Fanon sought to understand and explain. For Fanon religion served the interests of the bourgeois and the colonizers and thus his Marxian perspective did not permit him to think critically about why religion continued to prevail in the imagination of the colonized in resistance and after independence.

³ Frantz Fanon, *Towards the Africa Revolution*, 38-39. see similar remarks about maraboutic cults in *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), 42.

In this chapter I will demonstrate that while there is no overt and explicit Fanonian narrative on religion that Fanon nonetheless moved from an initial dismissal of religion towards a discourse of modernity that allowed him to view religion in sometimes utilitarian or privatized terms. Fanon appeared to have come to the recognition of the symbolic link between religious practices and other aspects of social life. Thus for Fanon, either religion would be reduced to the private domain for the expression of personal piety, or elements of religious practice or performance would be used in the anti-colonial struggle without ever assuming meaning beyond their strategic function.

It is my view that while Fanon was an ardent humanist, the context within which he developed his intellectual and political ideas happened to be societies permeated with strong religious ideologies and this invariably impacted on his thinking. Martinique was a society widely recognised as a largely (85%) Catholic population and had been such since the French first occupied the Island. Likewise, Algeria, the other major site of his political reflection, was and remains a largely (90%) Islamic society.

William Hart suggested that these anxieties about native traditions didn't spring so much from a tendency to consciously resist nativism, but were a reflection of how, Fanon, like his peers was customarily and habitually indisposed towards it.⁴ Hart went on to highlight the contribution of Fanon insofar as he argued that Fanon was not an anti-nativist bigot but rather that he understood the limits of nationalism, nativist or secular. Hart observed that Edward Said regarded Fanon "as the first major anti-imperialist theorist to recognize that orthodox nationalism follows the same path that imperialism created. While the imperialist appeared to cede authority to the nationalist bourgeoisie, in fact they really extended their

⁴ William Hart, *Edward Said and the Religious Effect of Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 107.

own hegemony... to produce new forms of imperialism."⁵ In particular Said found himself drawn to Fanon's recognition that the Manichaeism of the colonial space – master/ slave, light/ dark, civil/ savage – had the potential to re-emerge and reconfigure itself along gender, class and ethnic lines in the postcolonial city.⁶ In his desire to overcome imperialism – a religious, metaphysical, moralistic and geographical act of imagination – Said regarded Fanon as the best example of emancipatory nationalism.⁷ For Said, national liberation came to represent a form of postnationalist solidarity, where the god of nationalism is slain, and thus the nationalism as religious-cultural effect, to use Hart's terminology, would give way to a truly secular vision of human solidarity.

This chapter is concerned with the persistence of religion and tradition in the struggle for self-determination under colonial and postcolonial conditions. Fanon is intriguing in that his work became appropriated by a wide range of groups, including radical nationalists, the anti-colonial pan-Africanists, and US-based civil rights activists, with their "oppositional rhetoric of black 'mass' vernacularism".⁸ "Fanonism" appeared at once to resonate with such material struggles, and at the same time it seemed to fit quite comfortably within the discourse of postcolonial theory, largely resident within the western academy and far removed from the material conditions of the colonial periphery.⁹ The epistemic battle for the soul of Fanonism has as much to do with the politics of cultural studies, as it does with the complexities of the colonial condition. This tension between the contemporary relevance and the historical representation of a body of work was reflected in Homi Bhabha's introduction to *The Wretched of the Earth* when he wrote:

⁵ Ibid., 108.; also see Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 223.

⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 273.

⁷ William Hart, *Edward Said and the Religious Effect of Culture*, 110.

⁸ Houston Baker Jr., Martinia Dianara and Ruth H Lindeborg, *Black British Cultural Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 14.

⁹ Gates, H L Jr., "Critical Fanonism" in *Critical Inquiry* 17,3 (1991): 357-370

As we catch the religiosity in Fanon's language of revolutionary wrath – "the last shall be first," "the almighty body of violence rearing up..."¹⁰ and run it together with his description of the widening circle of national unity as reaching the "boiling point" in a way that "is reminiscent of a religious brotherhood, a Church or a mystical doctrine,"¹¹ we find ourselves both forewarned and wary of the ethnonationalist religious conflicts of our times.¹²

Fanon understood religion as a resource being deployed by both the colonialist and the nationalist bourgeois to "calm down the natives by the inevitable religion."¹³ Although he regarded Islam and Catholicism as the two great religions, he nonetheless argued that "the national bourgeoisie of each of these great two great religions, [sic] has totally assimilated colonialist thought in its most corrupt form."¹⁴ Fanon saw that it was not enough to simply oppose the master and so he argued that transformation required disruption of the world of both the master and slave. In developing a theory of the 'new man' Fanon struggled to account for the prevalence of the sacred in the life of the colonized. In encountering religious specialists and practices in the cultures within which he lived, Fanon was not unlike the anthropologists in Fiona Bowie's *The Anthropology of Religion* who sought to "explain away" such claims, institutions and practices by situating them in terms of social structure, history, psychology, and so on.¹⁵ Fanon was ambivalent about traditional beliefs and their role in the anti-colonial struggle. In his reply to Asad, José Casanova argues that contemporary genealogies of the secular, as was advanced by Fanon, failed to recognize the extent to which the formation of the secular was, for a long time already, inextricably tied to development and transformation of western Christianity.¹⁶ Although Fanon was intellectually conflicted, he couldn't completely dismiss religion or the role of traditional religions but he feared that it

¹⁰Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 2 and 73.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹² Homi Bhabha, "Foreword: Framing Fanon," in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, ix.

¹³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 52.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁵ Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 10.

¹⁶ José Casanova, "Secularization Revisited: A Reply to Talal Asad," in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and his Interlocutors*, eds. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 12-30.

would both undermine the anti-colonial struggle or at least that it would reinforce derogatory representations of the black other as primitive, savage and pre-modern.

FANON ON CATHOLICISM

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon's references to religion reflected a taken-for-granted attitude towards Catholicism while references to Islam were articulated as encountering the unknown. Of particular interest is Fanon's particular anxiety that traditional religion, often articulated as tribalism, should be viewed as a pre-modern belief system that is animist. In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon made a clear distinction between institutional religion - Catholicism and Islam, and the more visceral indigenous traditions. He viewed indigenous or native beliefs as premised on terrifying myths about maleficent spirits "which intervene every time a step is taken in the wrong direction, leopard-men, serpent-men, six-legged dogs, zombies... which create around the native a world of prohibitions" so as to create magical superstructures that informed the social order.¹⁷

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon described the colonized as "every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality"¹⁸ and yet throughout *The Wretched of the Earth* he was adamant that local cultural traditions detracted from the struggle for independence and that if it were not destroyed it should be transformed by the native intellectual so that it could serve the revolutionary cause.

A careful reading of Fanon's 'Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness' showed that all the examples Fanon gave of peasant spontaneity belonged to a distinctly Islamic anti-colonial tradition that, by the time Fanon was writing, had been in existence for over a century. One could argue that Islam had been part of the North African anti-colonial struggle about as long as Catholicism has been

¹⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 43.

¹⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 18.

part of sanctioning imperial engagements in the colonies. It was only by remaining silent about the anti-colonial character of this Islamic tradition that Fanon managed to present it as a spontaneous and visceral peasant outburst.¹⁹

At the time of writing *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon was still grappling with his own religious background as he came to terms with the Islamic context within which he found himself during the years immediately before his death. Marie-Aimée Hélie-Lucas, an Algerian woman-revolutionary who participated in the Algerian revolution, in an article on women, nationalism and religion argued that due to the particular context of Algeria, it was evident throughout the anti-colonial struggle that “the entwining concepts as heterogeneous as nation, religion and ethnicity began to shape the future of independent Algeria.”²⁰ Fanon was explicit in his view that Islam and Catholicism were the two great revealed religions but he was also deeply aware of colonial representations of the colonized as being largely without religion or at least being animists. Though it was not always clear what his views were about indigenous traditions, he did at the outset of *Black Skin, White Masks* critique the colonial tendency to couple blackness with spiritual backwardness when he wrote that in France,

I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; I was battered down by tom toms, cannibalism, spiritual backwardness, fetishism, race defects, slave ships and above all *Y'a bon Banania*.²¹

Fanon regarded Catholicism as the State religion of France which at the time was intimately intertwined with the French assimilationist policies in the colonial context; and Islam, the most widely practiced religion in Algeria, he felt was innately anti-colonial in character. Although, in Algeria, Catholicism was the religion of the colonist and therefore the state religion, Islam was practiced by

¹⁹ Fouzi Slisli, “Absence of Islamism in Fanon's Work.” *Critical Middle Eastern Studies* Volume 17, Issue 1 (March 2008): 97-108.

²⁰ Marie-Aimée Hélie-Lucas, “Women, Nationalism and Religion in the Algerian Liberation Struggle” in *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 276.

²¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 112.

the Arab majority. Islam assumed the forms of both traditional Islam characterized by textual hermeneutics and dogma, as well as the more charismatic Sufi traditions, known in the region as maraboutism. Unlike traditional Islam, Sufism or more accurately, maraboutism was characterized by its mystical and charismatic pursuit of divine knowledge through a bodily experience.

It is not hard to imagine that Fanon drew on familiar religious references when he famously quoted the bible in his exposition of decolonization as always marked by a violent reversal of power relations.²² He asserted that “the last shall be first”.²³ He compared Christianity in the colonies to the pesticide DDT and he viewed the Christian church as an institution that sought to suppress anything regarded as heretical or that may threaten the status quo.²⁴ “The church in the colonies,” he wrote, “is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor. And as we know, in this matter many are called but few chosen.”²⁵ Notwithstanding his reservations about Christianity's collusion with colonialism, Fanon demonstrated a particularly progressive reading of the biblical text when he coupled the statement about the last being first, with the colonized desire for self-determination.

In both biblical passages where it appeared this statement came at the end of parables that dealt with the redistribution of wealth, and as such, Fanon's coupling of it with rhetoric of decolonization reflected some familiarity with the Christian tradition. He deployed the powerful and enduring Christian religious rhetoric of “the last” to refer to and capture the imagination of the oppressed but of course the irony was that he would use such an explicitly Christian reference to speak of to an explicitly Islamic society. While it reflected something of his naivety about the appeal of religion in a society that he was new to, he did not regard it as having any intrinsic value other than as a means to

²² Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 33-34.

²³ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

contextualize the more important statement about violence. He concluded that “the last can be first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists”.²⁶

He made clear the fact that to him the colonialist bourgeoisie was aided and abetted in the pacification of the colonized by the inescapable powers of religion. While on the one hand he challenged the European assumption that the supposed lack of religion among the colonized should be regarded as evidence of the black person's lack of humanity, Fanon, on the other hand sought to convince his African colleagues that not only did religion produce a false consciousness of self, but that it also undermined the struggle for independence. He wrote that: “it is the native Christians who are considered as conscious, objective enemies of national independence.”²⁷ Yet he acknowledged that there were progressive African Christians such as when he cited the ‘most Christian newspaper’, Brazzaville's *The African Weekly*. He highlighted the newspaper's warning to an uncaring bourgeois:

to the starvers of the Congolese people is that God will punish their conduct. It continues: ‘If there is no room in your heart for consideration towards those who are beneath you, there will be no room for you in God's house.’²⁸

Commenting on the Catholic Church's collusion with colonialism Fanon wrote that “All the saints who turned the other cheek, who forgave those who trespassed against them, who, without flinching, were spat upon and insulted, are championed and shown as an example”.²⁹ Clearly Fanon regarded the church as an institution that essentially served to sanction the acts of the colonists and to encourage compliance from the colonized. In ‘Pitfalls of National Consciousness’ his reference to the Saint Bartholomew Massacre was a decisive assertion that the Catholicism under colonialism retained the militancy

²⁶ Ibid., 28.

²⁷ Ibid., 129.

²⁸ Ibid., 139.

²⁹ Ibid., 52.

of the 1572 French Wars of Religion when Catholics engaged in the violent and lethal suppression of protestants.³⁰ Fanon, citing this reference, reflected a familiarity with French Catholicism, presumably part of the school curriculum when he learned the proud history of French Catholic ascent. It also demonstrated that despite his knowledge of Catholicism, he remained critical of Catholic history and practice. He cited Césaire who argued that western civilization and Christianity were intimately coupled in the projects of imperialism.³¹ He also set out to demonstrate the absurdity of any Christian doctrine about the separation of the races when he dismissed the belief that held that:

it is laid down in the Bible that the separation of black and white races will be continued in heaven as on earth, and those blacks who are admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven will find themselves separately lodged in certain of those mansions of Our Father that are mentioned in the New Testament.³²

In a classic Marxian analysis Fanon argued that religion distracted the colonized from the revolutionary enterprise and he argued that "a belief in fatality removes all blame from the oppressor; the cause of misfortunes and of poverty attributed to God: he is fate. In this way the individual accepts the disintegration ordained by God, bows down before the settler and his lot, and by a kind of interior restabilization acquires a stony calm."³³ It would be a misrepresentation to argue that Fanon's references to the Catholic Church were the result of an uncritical hang-over from his upbringing and education in French, Catholic Martinique. Similarly it would be incorrect to suggest that a rebellion against Catholicism accounted for his Marxist leanings.

As demonstrated in the earlier chapters, Fanon's Marxist inclinations were significantly informed by his reading of and exchanges with Sartre, Césaire, de

³⁰ Ibid., 129.

³¹ Ibid., 91. citing Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Presence africaine, 1956), 14-15.

³² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 30.

³³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 42.

Beauvoir and Wright.³⁴ Thus we may reasonably argue that his ambivalence towards religion and the church was part of his intellectual inheritance. When in *Black Skin White Masks* he compared Henri Trilles' *L'ame du Pygmee d'Afrique* with Placide Temples' *La philosophie bantoue*, the latter of which he regarded as superficial, Fanon did not entirely dismiss religion but without prejudice recognized in Father Trilles text "conditions of worship, the persistence of rites, (and) the survival of myths". In fact he argued that as a Catholic anthropologist, Trilles had made a compelling case for the Christianization of the "savage Negro soul".³⁵ Fanon used Trilles thorough study to illustrate how indigenous cultures have been insulated from the flood of civilization and that as a result it produced an abnormality in the black person because he "has never had any relations with whites."³⁶

In the section above I have argued that for Fanon the Catholic Church colluded with the colonialists to serve the interests of the white Europeans in the colonies, and that the Christian church has had an anesthetizing effect on the oppressed masses, blinding them to their material predicament. Finally, Fanon suggested that it was not so much that religion had no place in the life of the colonized, but that the colonized needed to assume a new form, a new consciousness of self. His argument was undermined by its modernist assumptions and its dismissal of indigenous traditions, in terms of both religious form and practice. Fanon found the psychoanalyst, Abraham Kardiner's argument compelling and useful in his critique of Mannoni. He used Kardiner's observations in his critique of Mannoni, who advanced the fact that local or native kings sought association with the white colonists as evidence of a dependency complex. Fanon cited Kardiner who wrote:

To teach Christianity to the people of Alor would be a quixotic undertaking... [it] would make no sense inasmuch as one would be

³⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. 183 and 219.

³⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 142.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

dealing with personalities built out of elements that are in complete disaccord with Christian doctrine.³⁷

Fanon suggested that if blacks were impervious to the Christian teaching it was not because they were not able to assimilate the teaching, but that what was required was that the black and the Arab should assume a new form. We can assume that Fanon would have insisted that non-Europeans should first understand the enlightenment values of rationality and modernity before they could meaningfully engage with what Fanon termed "the teaching of Christ".³⁸ With regard to Arabs Fanon sought to draw a distinction between the formalism of Islam in urban centres and the more organic and mystical Islam that was more prevalent in rural areas. In his texts Fanon referred specifically to the mystical worship of holy men or saints among rural Algerians as maraboutic cults – cults presumably refer to non-orthodox traditions such as the mystical worship of holy men or saints in Islam.

The weight and influence of the Catholic Church was further evidenced when we read Fanon's invocation of Sartre who juxtaposes the catholicity (universality) of the church with the catholicity of the rational when in *The Anti-Semite and the Jew* he declared himself "a missionary of the universal; against the universality of the Catholic religion."³⁹ He believed that it was naïve to expect the colonized to integrate Christianity, as a set of "abstract values into his world when he has barely enough food to feed himself."⁴⁰ What Fanon suggested was that religion was not redundant, but simply recreational - an associational activity or practice that could follow after the development of consciousness and the liberation of the nation. Fanon concluded with the recognition of the fact that religion can be deployed in practices of oppression and slavery as well as in resistance thereto. He wrote in *Black Skin, Whites Masks*: "as times changed, we have seen

³⁷ Ibid., 95.; see also Abraham Kardiner and Ralph Linton, *The individual and His Society: The Psychodynamics of Primitive Social Organization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939) and Kardiner, et. al. *The Psychological Frontiers of Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945)

³⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 95.

³⁹ Jean Paul Satre, *Anti-Semite and the Jew*, (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 112-113.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 95.

how the Catholic religion justified, then condemned slavery and discrimination."⁴¹ This realization left Fanon disillusioned.⁴² Thus we can assume that this vital character of religion in some way accounts for Fanon's anxiety that Christian religion should not be offered room in revolutionary discourses.

FANON ON ISLAM

Fanon's ambivalence regarding religion was evidently not limited to Catholicism or Christianity in general. He expressed similar anxieties and reservations about Islam, both in his encounters with Muslims in the French metropole and later in Algeria. While he recognized Islam as the primary religion of the people of Algeria he demonstrated a distinct lack of knowledge about Islamic traditions, practices and values. This was very evident in his early therapeutic interventions as head of psychiatry at Blida, where his intervention and psychiatric workshops were unpopular among his Muslim patients. During this period he offered men crafts that were traditionally performed by women, and used, as a meeting place, a building that had previously been a mosque.

Fanon was either unaware of, or had little regard for, the fact that in the Algerian context the struggle between the colonizer and the colonized was framed in explicitly religious terms. When he did recognize that the French imagined Algeria as Islam holding its prey,⁴³ his opposition to the colonial practices in Algeria blinded him and prevented him from seeing the importance of religion to his Algerian colleagues and patients. Fanon wrote of the Algerian situation:

What is in fact the assertion of a distinct identity, concern(ed) with keeping in tact a few shreds of national existence, is attributed to religious, magical and fanatical behaviour.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 119.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 119.

⁴³ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakom Chevalier (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1965), 41.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

Fanon was skeptical that these professions of faith were part of his Muslim and Jewish colleagues' public and political life, and like Richard Wright he was incredulous of the prevalence of religious belief among African delegates at the 1956 Congress of Black Writers and Artists. Fanon did express to Ali Shari'ati, a fellow revolutionary who would become the main intellectual force behind the Islamic Revolution in Iran, his concerns that religious and sectarian spirits would become an obstacle to Third World unification. But he also encouraged Shari'ati to exploit the immense social and intellectual resources of Islam for the emancipation of the masses and the creation of a new and egalitarian society. "Breathe this spirit," he told Shari'ati in a letter from El-Moujahid's office in Tunis, "into the body of the Muslim Orient."⁴⁵

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon conveyed his awareness of the limitations of atheist ideologies as a framework for interpreting and explaining the Algerian situation: "the atheist method of salvation in this context," he says, "is forbidden"⁴⁶ and he remarked that the peasant "never stopped clutching to a way of life which was in practice anti-colonial."⁴⁷ Fanon, according to Shari'ati, "was pessimistic about the positive contribution of religion to social movements. He had, in fact, an antireligious attitude..."⁴⁸ He had however become aware that in Algeria "the struggle for national liberty has been accompanied by a cultural phenomenon known by the name of the awakening of Islam."⁴⁹

Considering his reflections on the *fadai* (Muslim martyr), and his privileging of the rural poor as the Algerian "proletariat" that would hold the administrative class accountable, Fanon came to a recognition of the instrumentalist potential of Islam. However he feared that maraboutism, a mystical Sufi tradition that was

⁴⁵ Sarah Shari'ati, 'Le Fanon connu de nous,' Ghorba, 14 December 2004

⁴⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 47.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁴⁸ Mansoor Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism and Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 255; see also Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian: A political Biography of Ali Shari'ati*, (London: I.B. Tauris Publisher, 2000), 126-127

⁴⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 171.

popularly practiced by the rural berber tribes, would undermine his imagined role of Algeria's poor in the struggle for self-fashioning and political independence.⁵⁰ He showed a deep dis-ease with maraboutism's preoccupation with the mystical because it emphasized an inward piety that he believed distracted the people from their material reality. Maraboutic devotional practices which included incantation, whirling, drumming, and other charismatic practices geared towards a bodily experience of the sacred would have provoked in Fanon similar anxieties to that generated by negritude's pursuit of the irrational, and ritual performances of Caribbean religions. In *Wretched of the Earth* he makes clear references to zombies and vodou, associated with the Caribbean, and to vampirism and the djinn of Algerian mysticism in his critique of religion as undermining the struggle for liberation.⁵¹ So while Fanon recognized traditional Islam as being able to add value to the anti-colonial struggle, he viewed the more mystical maraboutsism as both vital but also potentially disruptive.

Thus Fanon recognised that the indigenous Islamic traditions, by which the "mass of the peasantry continue to revere their religious leaders who are descendent of ancient families," had an authentic anti-colonial character.⁵² Notwithstanding this recognition of an Islamic tradition of anti-colonialism, as well as the use of insurgency tactics that deployed traditional Islamic symbols, like the veil in '*L'Algérie se dévoile*' (*Algeria Unveiled*), Fanon appeared to underestimate the contribution of Islam. It seemed that either he was engaged in weeding out all explicit references to Islam, or he possibly lacked the rhetorical and interpretive tools to give expression to the significance of these traditions. This raises the question of whether he was ignorant of this Islamic tradition, or if he simply chose to ignore it? No doubt there were various areas of Fanon's work that are grossly neglected and perhaps this is one such intersection of interests.

⁵⁰ Richard Pennell. *Morocco Since 1830: A History* (London: Hurst, 2001), 9-10.

⁵¹ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 45

⁵²*ibid.*, 136.

For example, although he was widely regarded as one of the most strident critics of colonialism, he has been taken to task for under-valuing women's roles in the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria. Fanon, most notably in his essay, "Algeria Unveiled," exposed and critiqued the way in which colonists sought to undermine the domestic realm by advocating the liberation of women from the oppression of Islamic patriarchy. Fanon and the leadership of FLN argued that the colonialist strategy to supposedly liberate the Muslim women were ultimately an attempt to undermine the foundation of Algerian society. They thus sought to oppose the colonial representation of Algerian culture as medieval and barbaric because colonialists believed:

if we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil.⁵³

Thus the veil and the women who wore it became a significant site of struggle. So whether recognized as such or not, Fanon and the revolutionary movement responded to the conditions determined by the colonialists when the movement decided to involve women in the struggle for liberation. The decision to activate the veiled woman in the anti-colonial struggle did not grow solely from the FLN, but rather it was an attempt to wrestle back representations of the veil. They decided that since the unveiled Arab women were granted access to European quarters and allowed free movement in the city the FLN recruited Arab women to dress as such to deceive the French in order to move messages and weapons from one FLN cell to another. Likewise, when conditions required it, the movement would ask its female cadres to put on the veil in order to deflect suspicion. Thus women served loyally in the ranks of the FLN.

Feminist scholars have argued that this apparent elevation of women in the Algerian anti-colonial struggle really reflected the prevalence of male hegemony within the FLN. These feminists have argued that "this kind of critique

⁵³ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 37-38.

of imperialism, which is by no means confined to Islamic society, but applies to nationalist movements in most other colonial societies in Africa, India, and East and Southeast Asia, tends at the same time to keep women within the structures of patriarchal domination."⁵⁴ Thus they have suggested that, although Fanon argued that the veil was a mechanism of resistance,⁵⁵ the women remained invisible. The successful deployment of the veiled Muslim woman in anti-colonial resistance, led Fanon to assert the distinction between the religious formalism of Islam in the city, where such use of the veil is made possible and the visceral and more esoteric character of Islam in the rural areas.⁵⁶

Fanon's ambivalence about Islam was made more evident by remarks about the Algerians' religion. He spoke only in the most general terms, such as observing "an atmosphere of solemnity," a "veritable collective ecstasy," but he never named it for what it was: Islam. He had been betrayed by his French Catholicism, or possibly it showed the limits of his analytical framework for dealing with non-catholic religions. He admitted his rejection of maraboutic fraternities and regarded them to be elements which would disrupt the anti-colonial enterprise.⁵⁷ As such he believed that "their destruction is the preliminary to the unification of the people."⁵⁸ This sentiment was also reflected by his description of the spiritual atmosphere of Algerian villages as that of a *Church*: "All this is evocative of a confraternity, a church, and a mystical body of belief at one and the same time."⁵⁹ Robert Revere suggested that this added to the body of evidence that "Fanon fails to recognize the reform efforts of the Society of Algerian 'Ulema and their work of secularization of education, an important step in the reawakening

⁵⁴ Prasenjit Duara, "Introduction" in *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then*, ed. P. Duara (London: Routledge, 2004), 10.

⁵⁵ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 63.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 70. While Fanon was acutely conscious of not discriminating between religion and ethnic groups, he was quite cavalier about the distinction between urban and rural. This distinction is of course consistent with the modernist assumptions that underpinned his early schooling and university education.

⁵⁷ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 165.

⁵⁸ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 94.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

of Algerian nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s which led to the revolution itself."⁶⁰ This group of Islamic scholars were part of a longer anti-colonial legacy, which was in part reflected by the fact that between 1865 and 1936 only a small number of Muslims in Algeria availed themselves to Napoleon's *senatus consulto*, an ordinance that extended full French citizenship to those Muslims who agreed to divest themselves of civil status under Islamic law. That the number totaled less than three thousand reflected the extent of anti-colonial sentiment in the Muslim community at large.⁶¹

Fouzi Slisli suggested that, while Fanon harboured ambivalence towards religious traditions such as Islam and Christianity, he was happy to attribute anti-colonial sentiments in the Algerian nation to rural tribal or religious organizations. He romanticized the Algerian rural poor for the fact that he believed that they would hold the bourgeoisie accountable and as such he was so keen to give recognition to the peasant-oriented 'noble savage' that at times he slipped into an orientalism that at times equals Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The Algerian peasant, he felt, "defends his tradition stubbornly"⁶² and the 'wretched of the earth' were comparable to 'hordes of rats' who acted when moved by the primordial spirits of their environments – the bush, the jungle, or the desert.⁶³ He wrote that "this unchanging way of life, which hangs on like grim death to rigid social structures, may occasionally give birth to movements which are based on religious fanaticism."⁶⁴ These conflicting engagements with religious discourse make it quite hard to ascertain whether religion represented a taken-for-granted category in Fanon's interpretive framework or whether he sought to actively exclude it from the discourses of psychic and national liberation of the black person or nation. Whatever the direction, this study will consider the role and

⁶⁰ Robert Revere, 'Revolutionary ideology in Algeria,' *Polity*, 5(4) (1973): 477-488.

⁶¹ James D leSueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 20.

⁶² Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 88.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

impact of religion in the broader context within which Fanon worked, and of course how he sought to address the issue of religion in practice.

Of course Fanon could not avoid addressing issues related to Islam, as would be the same for any theorist working in Algeria at the time. Lamia Ben Youssef Zayzafoon observed that in "Algeria Unveiled," Fanon explained how the veil became a sign of Algerian Islamic identity only when the French decided to break native resistance by strategically unveiling the "Algerian woman" and imbuing her with principles of French civilization by sending her into French schools."⁶⁵ Considering the general colonial tendency to disregard indigenous religious or cultural traditions Alice Cherki argued that Azoulay, an Algerian born Jew, only came to appreciate the existence of Islam and a Muslim cultural identity once he began to work with Fanon.

Fanon's intellectual approach (*emphasizing the role culture played in pathology*) enabled me to apprehend a content I would otherwise have considered folkloric, and from that moment of realization, I understood it wasn't.⁶⁶

Although Cherki illustrated how Fanon's approach may have helped Azoulay come to an appreciation of Islamic culture and tradition as an integral part of the Algerian life, she did not bring us any closer to an understanding of whether Fanon had worked out a position on the role and significance of religion in the Algerian struggle. Ernest Gellner argued that, as thinker and visionary, Fanon represented the vision of a promised land in the Algerian struggle for liberation. Gellner discussed Algeria as "home of the revolution" which attracted pilgrims there, perhaps in the way that the Algerian struggle appealed to and seduced a young Fanon after he had become disillusioned by French metropolitan racism. But Gellner wrote that:

⁶⁵ Lamia Ben Youssef Zayzafoon, *The Production of the Muslim Woman* (Lexington Books, 2005), 81-82.

⁶⁶ Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, trans. Nadia Benabid. Ithaca (NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 52.

The main reason why an eager socialist pilgrim, however willing to have faith, will find his ardour somewhat damped, is the prominence of Islam in modern Algeria. This does not look like the home of a secular socialist millennium. Islam seems alive amongst the people *and* is endorsed by the authorities. In fact, the man on the street is most unlikely to know the name of Frantz Fanon.⁶⁷

These remarks captured the tensions and ambivalence that were, on occasion, reflected in Fanon's relationship to the Algerian struggle, and to Islamism in particular. Fanon's intellectual work has historically been situated in the tradition of European humanism, and as such there was little room for the spontaneous indigenous religious and cultural traditions. In his review of Alice Cherki's *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, Benjamin Brower argued that in Blida, Fanon's reforms exposed the initial limits of his knowledge of Algerian society. These included language barriers since Fanon knew no Arabic or Berber as well as the rules of gender in North African society. For example, Algerian men at Blida, many from rural origins, responded poorly to the basket-weaving project which he ran at the psychiatric ward because it was regarded as an activity reserved in village life for women. These initial interventions, including the fact that the workshop was convened in a converted mosque exposed Fanon's lack of sensitivity to Islam. This would have been quite embarrassing for the young psychiatrist, but ultimately it was this disregard for religion that may have contributed to the failure of his initial attempts at psychiatric treatment at Blida.⁶⁸ Fanon came to understand that while access to political institutions were mediated through French law and protocols, the social and moral life of Algerians was determined by Islamic law.⁶⁹

In Algeria in particular it was clear that the character of the anti-colonial resistance was intimately related to the anti-Muslim rhetoric of French colonial

⁶⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 149.

⁶⁸ Benjamin Claude Brower, 'Review of Frantz Fanon: A Portrait', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, Volume 9:2 (2008), http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v009/9.2.brower.html (Accessed 4 March 2009)

⁶⁹ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life* (London: Granta, 2000), 233-236.

policies. T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting suggested that while the Cremenieux Decree of 1871 extended citizenship to Jewish settlers who lived in Algeria without requiring that they renounce their religion, no such privilege was extended to Muslims and Berbers. Likewise the 1918 Algerian Charter, which proposed that all Algerians who served in the French military in World War I should be granted citizenship, was rejected by the French National Assembly. When the French government sought, in the late 1930s, to revisit the issues of citizenship, political representation, the separation of church and state, the recognition of Arabic as the official language and the franchisement of Muslim women, all these reforms were unanimously rejected by the *pieds-noirs* (Algeria's European minority).⁷⁰ It was thus clear that whether Fanon recognized religion as a profoundly moving force in the life of Algerians, there was no denying that it was an enduring influence in the ways that people understood their material conditions, and likewise, shaped their responses thereto.

The 1947 electoral allotment of only half the seats in the national assembly to the Muslim majority reflected a French anxiety about the Muslim population and it bred a deep distrust within the majority Muslim population, a distrust that led a number of dissident groups to form the *Front de Liberation Nationale* (FLN) in 1954. Fanon rarely spoke about Arab nationalism and appeared to never quite grasp the complex ways that Islam shaped Algeria's anti-colonial movements although his ideas about the "fossilization" of traditional culture were in general agreement with the nationalists' critique of popular religious practices like saint veneration.⁷¹ Alice Cherki points to the fact that at the end of the 1940s, Europeans only comprised a tenth of the population of 10 million. The 30 000 strong Jewish community were indigenous, either descendants of migrants from around the Mediterranean or members from the indigenous Berber community who converted to Judaism. The remaining nine million were generally

⁷⁰ Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Frantz Fanon: Conflict and Feminism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 54.

⁷¹ Alice Cherki *Frantz Fanon A Portrait*, 94.; see also the review by Benjamin Claude Brower's review of *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, Volume 9:2 (2008)

designated as Arab, ignoring the fact that many were in fact Arabized Berbers. This designation served to deny any social and linguistic diversity and ultimately referred to those Muslims who did not hold French citizenship.⁷²

The society had for a long time been structured and compartmentalized, almost branded into three major components: Europeans, Jews and natives, which is to say, Christians, Jews and Muslims. These religious markers were the best expressions of the inner boundaries, impalpable at times, the present albeit invisible walls of glass around which society was organized.⁷³

It is hard to imagine that Fanon, a thorough theorist as he was, would be so focused on his imagined postcolony that he was blind to the strict racial and religious hierarchy in Algeria, a society with a religious diversity decidedly more pronounced than in his native Martinique or his ideological home, France. Cherki suggested that prejudice permeated everyday interactions at every level of society in the colonies, and she cites an Algerian proverb to convey the sentiment:

the French spit on the Spanish who spit on the Italians who spit on the Maltese who spit on the Jews who spit on the Arabs who spit on the black.⁷⁴

This strict racial and cultural hierarchy would not have escaped Fanon, considering the fact that he grew up in the French Antilles, a society highly stratified by similar racial hierarchies. Except in the North African context the religio-cultural elements were more meaningful than religion would have been in the apparently homogenous Catholic community of Martinique. And Cherki asserted that “despite the resource of his Antillean experience and his intellectual struggle with the colonial idea, this was the first time Fanon had found himself in a society so rigidly encoded”.⁷⁵ For much of the first part of his essay “Algeria Unveiled” Fanon described the predicament of the Algerian

⁷² Alice Cherki *Frantz Fanon A Portrait*, 38-39.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

Muslim in relation to colonial representations of Islam. He wrote that the “behavior of the Algerian (Muslim) was very firmly denounced and described as medieval and barbaric.”⁷⁶

Fanon understood that the colonized were faced with a double negative. In the same manner that he found himself caught between the colonizers claim that the black’s lack of religion meant that he lacked humanity and his view that religion prevented the colonized from confronting their material reality, Fanon recognized the predicament of the Algerian Muslim. He understood that Algerian Muslims sought to stick to their traditions, but in the face of colonial claims of Islam as “sadistic and vampirish” the Algerian Muslim found themselves confronted with unveiling women and permitting social contact not ordinarily permitted.⁷⁷ Thus any move to dispel European representation of Islam, put Algerians at risk of disrupting, and possibly corrupting, tradition. Notwithstanding these tensions, Fanon and the FLN later expanded the limits of Muslim public behavior when they recruited veiled and unveiled women into the movement’s ranks to aid their acts of resistance.

The representation of the black and Arab Other that Fanon sought to oppose were those colonialist conceptions of Islam as suffocatingly strict religious practices, or in terms of the lack of religion among the Africans. Wherever there occurred recognition of a religious practice it would be described as ‘tribal religion’ which was regarded as savage and oblivious. Fanon was conflicted by these representations because, while he rejected the European representation of the colonized as savage, Fanon remained quite uneasy about the indigenous or ‘tribal’ traditions in particular, which he viewed as primitive and pre-modern.⁷⁸ He was anxious that where nationalists failed to live up to the expectation of the masses, the people would fall back towards old tribal attitudes.

⁷⁶ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 38.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 37-39.

⁷⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 95 and 109.

FANON ON INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS

Fanon was particularly conflicted about indigenous traditions. His modernism did not permit him to imagine a legitimate place for autochthonous or mystical traditions in the postcolony. While he was critical of the tendency among the native and national bourgeois to dismiss the traditional leaders who 'ruled' in rural areas, he was equally reluctant to endorse their ongoing legitimacy. Fanon regarded indigenous traditions as largely the result of colonialist enterprise or a survival from a pre-modern era. He argued that colonialism did not simply advance the existence of tribes; but it also reinforces it and separates them. He wrote that "instead of organizing the sheiks and the chiefs against the 'revolutionaries' in the towns, native committees organize[d] the tribes and confraternities into parties."⁷⁹ He was at once opposed to negritude's search for a mystical African past and to the colonialist's promotion of indigenous traditions. In 'The Lived Experience of the Black' he considered the value of Senghor's negritude when he cited Senghor:

you tokowaly, you listen to what cannot be heard, and
you explain to me what the ancestors are saying in the
sea-like serenity of the constellations,
That familiar bull, the scorpion, the leopard, the elephant
and the fish,
and the milky brilliance of the spirits in the shell of celestial infinity,
But here comes the complicity of the goddess Moon and
the veils of the shadows fall,
Night of Africa, my black night, mystical and bright,
black and shining.⁸⁰

In evaluating the merit of Senghor's negritude Fanon also highlighted the limitation of this more poetic notion of negritude. He found Senghor's privileging of the indigenous tradition to be more of an epistemic mirage and he invoked Césaire to illustrate that, like Césaire's conception of negritude, his black heritage was grounded in reality, not simply lofty ideals – not a tower and not a

⁷⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 94.

⁸⁰Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 129.; see also Senghor, *Chants d'ombre* (Paris: edition de Seuil, 1945)

cathedral.⁸¹ However he recognized that there existed a wealth of evidence to show the contribution of African and Islamic scholars through the centuries. The “accounts of learned black men (doctors of theology who travelled to Mecca to discuss the Koran)” restored his faith in his heritage.⁸² Fanon did however assert that the recovery of such histories made little difference in the material relations between black and white, between the colonizer and the colonized. For example he wrote:

I concede that whatever proof there is of a once mighty Songhai civilization does not change the fact that the Songhais are today undernourished, illiterate and abandoned to the skies and water, with a blank mind and glazed eyes.⁸³

In France he found his blackness oppressive, “dense and undeniable” because despite assertions that “we no longer live in an age where people marveled at a black priest”⁸⁴ or a physician or a teacher, blacks were still regarded as savages, morons and illiterates.⁸⁵ Likewise, Fanon was acutely aware of how in the colonial frontier these representations also prevailed – although they exhibited differently, whether animist, primitive or savage.

In his response to Senghor’s negritude in ‘the lived experience of the black’ Fanon offered a particularly illuminating conception of indigenous religion as “primitive”. At the outset he made a causal link between blood, ritual ecstasy and carnality which he regarded as elements of the mystical relation between the group and the cosmos. He asserted that the “folklore in Martinique is meager” and that few children knew local histories, which made the Antillean vulnerable to cultural imposition.⁸⁶ The scenes that Fanon recalled in *Black Skin, White Masks* were partly drawn from his knowledge of religious practices in Martinique and partly derived from what he read in the ethnographic accounts

⁸¹ Ibid., 124.

⁸² Ibid., 130.

⁸³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 168.

⁸⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 117.

⁸⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 169.

⁸⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 153.

of scholars such as Durkheim, Leiris and Metraux. He cited Césaire who initially advanced a conception of Caribbean practices as part survival of African religions when he wrote: “But they abandon themselves, possessed, to the essence of all things, knowing nothing of the externals but possessed by the movement of things.”⁸⁷ Fanon's observations and remarks were similar to the observation of Joseph Murphy, the author of *Santeria: African Spirits in America*. Murphy wrote that at a bembé for Shango, the God of thunder:

The music seems to be coming from inside the people as if by their movement they are liberating the sound from within themselves. One woman in particular is carried by this energy, and others begin to channel theirs toward her. The dancing circle clears for her alone, and the drums focus directly on her. Her eyes are closed, and she is whirling and whirling. She bumps up against the human ring that encloses her and gently rebounds back to the circle's center. . . she falls to the ground... Oshun has arrived.⁸⁸

Fanon went on to declare his anxiety and wrote of being “doubly alert”, in which he suggested that having come face to face with these practices he was appalled by the “obscenity of dances and of words”. While he understood the meaning of the clan ritual to bring invisible forces into action, whether to provide direction or to avert disaster, Fanon nonetheless described these manifestations and initiations as “Black magic! Orgies, witches' Sabbaths, heathen ceremonies.”⁸⁹ While it is hard to ascertain whether these ritual practices most offended Fanon's Catholic sensibilities or his anti-racism, he clearly viewed “primitive religion” as pre-modern and irrational. He coupled the carnality and black magic with animism and Levi-Bruhl's “primitive mentality”. Finally he asserted that “all of this is typical of peoples who have not kept up with the evolution of the human race... humanity at its lowest.”⁹⁰ Of course this position allowed Fanon to dismiss “primitive religion” as depriving blacks of the gains of

⁸⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 124. citing Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1956), 77-78.

⁸⁸ Joseph Murphy, *Santeria: African Spirits in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 96-96.

⁸⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 126.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 126.

modernity, and he asserted that the recovery of originality that was torn out of the black was only possibly through the rational expulsion of the “primitive”.⁹¹

Another such representation that he addressed in his essay ‘On National Culture’ is the idea of “savage”. He is acutely conscious of the prevailing representation of the native as savage, illiterate and violent, and he is determined to assert the humanness of the native. He proposes to invert the idea of the savage and argues that it becomes redundant in the face of black self-recognition, when natives no longer accept power of these representations over their lives. The term ‘savage’ has enjoyed a long and paradoxical history. The correlation between the idea of the “primitive”, religion and mentality and identifying people as savage have predominated until the early twentieth century. The word savage has also evoked more exotic connotations from other writers such as Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) who regarded the savage state as more spontaneous and alive. The aggressive proliferation of evolutionary theories during the nineteenth century uncritically reinforced the representation of the natives as savage. Fanon understood that even in the post-enlightenment period, knowledge forms and descriptions of non-European people or cultures were deeply shaped by such representations.

For example J. C. Prichard, a nineteenth century ethnologist and member of the British Aboriginal Protection Society, predicted the extinction of all savage races. He argued that the savage races cannot be saved and that the primary objective of engagement with the native must be a concern with their physical and moral characteristics.⁹² Similarly, in *Savage Childhood*, Dudley Kidd argued that other than being uneducated, aggressively self-assertive, vain and indolent, a more primordial characteristic caused the native to be “sociable and unreflective that it never occurs to him that he might possibly be an unpleasant

⁹¹ Ibid., 129.

⁹² J.C. Prichard, “On the Extinction of Human Races” *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* Vol.28 (1839): 166-170.

object to any other human being."⁹³ Understanding the long and protracted history of physical and psychic alienation of the black person, Frantz Fanon concluded that "in the colonized country the most elementary, most savage, and the most undifferentiated nationalism is the most fervent and efficient means of defending the national culture."⁹⁴ Fanon appeared to have understood this paradox because he began to suspect that the revision of indigenous practices, taboos and values are simultaneously informed by the struggle for national liberation and the renaissance of the state.

Sartre, in his preface to *Wretched of the Earth*, suggested that Fanon understood the colonial project as seeking to "keep some feudal rulers in her pay; dividing and ruling she created native bourgeoisie, sham from beginning to end."⁹⁵ Fanon argued that colonialism first privileged then exploited two kinds of indigenous institutions: the chiefs and the witchdoctors.

the peasant masses, steeped in a never changing routine, continue to revere their religious leaders, descendants of illustrious families. The tribe, with one voice, embarks on the path designated by the traditional chief. Colonialism secures the services of these loyal servants by paying them a small fortune.⁹⁶

Fanon viewed this colonialist support of traditional chiefs as a way to keep the masses from becoming active in the struggle for national independence. He argued that it was through exploiting the ideological weakness and spiritual instability of this section of the population that the nationalist struggle was undermined. Notwithstanding his view of the peasant masses as blinded by their "never changing tradition", in his desire to forge a national unity he cautioned against the native nationalist's disregard for traditional authorities, and wrote:

traditional chiefs are ignored, sometimes taken down a peg.
Instead of integrating the history of the villages and the conflicts

⁹³ Dudley Kidd, *Savage Childhood* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906), 5.

⁹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 196.

⁹⁵ Jean Paul Sartre "Preface" in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 10.

⁹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 109.

between the tribes and the clans into the people's struggle, the history of the future nation has a singular disregard for minor local histories and tramples the only thing relevant for the nation's actuality.⁹⁷

Yet elsewhere Fanon asserted that this integration was not the legitimating of indigenous traditions, or a privileging of custom over modernity, rather he regarded it as a means to avoid ethnic and regional fragmentation which could destabilized the nationalist struggle. In *The Wretched of the Earth* we see how, frustrated by Senghor's promotion of folklore at the expense of the Algerian struggle, Fanon asserted that "it is around the peoples' struggle that the African-Negro culture takes on substance and not around songs, poems or folklore".⁹⁸ Evidently, Fanon saw tribal, religious and ethnic traditions as powerful forces that, like the force of colonialism, threatened to undermine revolutionary gains. Fanon was deeply anxious about the disruptive potential of nativism or any spontaneous religious tradition. Like Edward Said, Fanon regarded nativism as the eminent form of nationalism, and a religious force, and as such they argued that:

for the nativist, national identity is defined by the quest for pure essence and lost origins. Nativism is millenarian in that it looks backwards by looking forward to a time when a pristine, essential. Precolonial, *prelapsarian* sense of peoplehood will be restored.⁹⁹

Fanon's ambivalence about religion and ethnic tradition found particular clarity in those sections of *The Wretched of the Earth* that addressed the issue of manufacturing a new national consciousness. The following statement made this abundantly clear:

National consciousness is nothing but a crude, empty fragile shell. The cracks in it explain how easy it is for young independent countries to switch back from nation to ethnic group and from state

⁹⁷ Ibid., 90.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 189.

⁹⁹ William Hart, *Edward Said and the Religious Effect of Culture*, 108.

to tribe – a regression which is terribly detrimental and prejudicial to the development of the nation and national unity.¹⁰⁰

Homi Bhabha further developed this concern of Fanon's by suggesting that he sought to develop an idea of decolonization as both ethical and political, marked by a determination to move beyond the "regression that leads to the "tribalisms" of religious fundamentalism."¹⁰¹ Bhabha went on to suggest that France as the bearer of universal rights and reason not only imposed a new category of time on the indigenous population but its assimilationist policies made it impossible for local populations "to emerge as "French citizens" in a public sphere of their own ethical and cultural making."¹⁰² Abiola Irele argued that this had been a longstanding tension and ambivalence that Antilleans shared in relation to Africa. To illustrate this he highlighted a commentary of Africa by Rene Maran who wrote:

here with my French heart, I sense that I am on the soil of my ancestors, ancestors that I reject because I do not share either their primitive mentality or their taste, but who are nevertheless my ancestors.¹⁰³

Thus while Fanon on the one hand shared Maran's and latterly Richard Wright's view on the "primitive mentality" he understood that in Algeria the tribal customs, like the *haik* (the veil) would become central to the struggle for independence. And yet he argued that dissolving all tribal differences was central to revolutionary success because:

The colonial system encourages chieftaincies and keeps alive the old Marabout confraternities. Violence is in action all inclusive and national. It follows that it is closely involved in the liquidation of regionalism and of tribalism. Thus the national parties show no pity at all toward the caids and the customary chiefs...Their destruction is the preliminary to the unification of the people.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 119.

¹⁰¹ Homi Bhabha, "Foreword", *Wretched of the Earth*, xvi.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, xxii.

¹⁰³ Rene Maran, *Le petit roi de chemirie* (Paris, 1942), 15.

¹⁰⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 74.

Fanon saw the struggle for independence as always fought on two fronts: against colonialism, poverty and under-development; and also against 'sterile' tradition.¹⁰⁵ Fanon understood there to be an unavoidable relationship between religion and ethnic tradition. While he made general references in relation to Africa, in *Wretched of the Earth* he showed some sensitivity for the concerns of the people of Algeria – especially those outside of the cities – insofar as their ethnic and national identity continued to be defined in religio-ethnic terms. He acknowledged the prevalence of maraboutic cults, who venerated saints or holy men who were descended from illustrious families. This recognition showed that Fanon came to understand that the indigenous traditions were intimately coupled with ethnic identity. Thus, in our reading of his engagement with the indigenous we need to also consider his observations and remarks on ethnicity.

While Fanon never clarified his position on how the various tribal constituencies would come together under the national government, he did caution that social divisions would exhibit as tribalism or regionalism. He believed that regionalism, as an indicator of ethnic loyalties, should always be subordinate to national interests.¹⁰⁶ He argued that "tribalism in the colonial phase gives way to regionalism in the national phase and it finds expression as far as institutions are concerned in federalism."¹⁰⁷ Fanon argued that in the postcolony, those citizens previously organized around tribal identities would continue to live along old geographic divisions and while ethnic identities might become redundant, it was likely that one group would be privileged over another. Adele Jinadu suggested that in his discussion of peasant conservatism, Fanon "neither paints a picture of a socially undifferentiated rural Africa nor does he overlook the existence of peasant landlordism."¹⁰⁸ Fanon constantly referred to the fact that the indigenous poor were "ringed around by marabouts, witchdoctors and

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 75.

¹⁰⁶ Adele Jinadu, *Fanon: In Search of the African Revolution* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1986), 217.

¹⁰⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 90.

¹⁰⁸ Adele Jinadu, *Fanon: In search of the African Revolution*, 194-195.

customary chieftans”¹⁰⁹ whose control over these groups were made all the more possible because of traditional social hierarchies and as a result of the spiritual and religious aura associated with these roles and positions. Fanon described these institutions as archaic and inert, “functioning under the oppressor’s supervision and patterned like a caricature of formerly fertile institutions”.¹¹⁰ He argued that lack of self-determination and political integrity would ultimately produce a spiritual wasteland at the heart of the nation.¹¹¹

Fanon argued that as a result of having witnessed the liquidation of his culture – “his language, his food habits, his sexual behavior, his way of sitting down, of resting, of laughing, of enjoying himself – the colonized came to recognize that “God is not on his side.”¹¹² Thus Fanon made a critical observation that colonialism not only disrupted the ecology of the colonized but also the cosmology of the colonized. At the end of his essay, “Racism and Culture” Fanon tried to reconcile his own anxieties about the pursuit of the indigenous as emotional and irrational which he viewed as paradoxical to the intellectual development that anti-colonial activists already advanced and mastered. Sekyi-Otu argued that “notwithstanding the husk of indigenesness, the culture of the colonized is an alienated culture.”¹¹³ Fanon was opposed to intellectuals and professionals collaborating with “customs, traditions and beliefs formerly denied” because of what he saw as a fanatical character of the indigenous.¹¹⁴ He was aware that the recovery of old ways of living invariably provoked representation about the black intellectual who consulted the witchdoctor, or about the Arab doctor who slept on the floor as ways to undermine the colonized culture. Faced with the fact that for the indigenous people the valorization of tradition was regarded as “living it as a defense mechanism... as a symbol of purity, of

¹⁰⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 87.

¹¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution* trans. Haakom Chevalier (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1965), 34.

¹¹¹ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 148.

¹¹² Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, 38.

¹¹³ Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, 96.

¹¹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Towards the Africa Revolution*, 42-43.

salvation”¹¹⁵ Fanon conceded that possibly the two traditions, western, modern rationalism and indigenism could enrich each other.

Fanon’s sentiment of mutuality reflected more about the context in which the paper was delivered - a presentation made to the 1956 Congress of Black Writers and Artist – than it said about Fanon’s position on indigenous traditions. This position stood in direct contrast to Fanon’s conclusions at the end of his essay on “colonialism and medicine” published in 1959 when he wrote:

Old superstitions began to crumble. Witchcraft, *maraboutism* (already discredited as a result of the propaganda carried on by the intellectuals), the belief in the *djinn*, all these things seemed to be part of the very being of the Algerian, were swept away by the action and practice initiated by the Revolution.¹¹⁶

The statement revealed something of Fanon’s intolerance for indigenous and ‘superstitious’ beliefs. Maraboutism was the practice of certain Islamic religious communities and in fact Ernest Gellner in *Muslim Society* argued that “the insistence on the pervasiveness of maraboutism does indeed contain a grave error: the cult of saints is not in the very least a sign of the weakness of Islamic identification. The saint-worship, on the contrary, is a means of achieving that very Muslim identification, on the part of the rustic population who cannot easily approach the faith through, the Book, and prefer that the Word should be flesh.”¹¹⁷ It is not my intention to differentiate between various Islamic traditions, but since Fanon included maraboutism as an indigenous or syncretistic religious formation I propose to include it as among the other-than-formal religious traditions as he did when he clustered them together as “chiefs, *caids* and witch-doctors”.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 42.

¹¹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, 143.

¹¹⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*, 158.

¹¹⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 109.

Maraboutism is a mystical Islamic tradition that has been part of the Arab world for centuries. The Marabouts, who served as spiritual leaders in some Muslim communities, later became known as holy men and were greatly venerated as saints who may be attached to mosques. Their tombs, also called Marabouts, were often places of pilgrimage. Traditionally associated with the more mystical Sufi tradition within Islam, Maraboutism was often regarded as more esoteric and less orthodox, and as such was prevalent with Islam as practiced in rural Algeria. Macey wrote that although Fanon had some therapeutic interest in the relation between these religious traditions and mental health, very little of his writing on the matter survived. He viewed these supposed cults of local saints, whether dead or alive, as traditions where “popular forms of Islam fuse with pre-Islamic animism, with ritual dances being used to induce a trance-like state that could produce a cathartic effect.”¹¹⁹ Similarly, the *djinn*, an ordinarily malevolent spirit, that haunted a place or possesses a person, was regarded as the source of affliction or misfortune. Treatment for the *djinn* normally involves a pilgrimage to a shrine of a powerful marabout where attempts would be made to expel the spirit or where amulets could be purchased to ensure protection from further misfortune.

For Fanon these ‘syncretistic’ practices would have been seen as a corruption “of the great revealed religions” - the religion that revealed to him a long heritage of Quranic scholarship.¹²⁰ These superstitions threatened to throw black people back into traditions that were “primitive and sub-human”.¹²¹ Fanon also feared that if maraboutic cults persisted, the sheiks and chiefs who distrusted the urbanized nationalist elite would allow themselves to be exploited by the colonialists who would then organize these tribes and fraternities into parties. He wrote that “splinter groups are born, and tendencies and parties which have their origin in ethnic and regional differences spring up.”¹²²

¹¹⁹ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life*, 236.

¹²⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 130.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹²² Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 94.

He understood that in the European imagination the black Other would always be defined in terms of intellectual, physical, moral and religious backwardness. When confronted with the racial gaze in 'the lived experience of the black' Fanon found himself "deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, (and) racial stigma".¹²³ While on the one hand he sought to celebrate the spontaneity of the indigenous he also sought to downplay those aspects of the spontaneous that revealed itself as 'obscure', 'emotional' and 'retrograde'.¹²⁴ In the same way that Fanon sought to distance himself from the Senghor's negritude movement for its privileging "emotion as Negro and reason as Greek",¹²⁵ he also sought to underplay the visceral elements of the indigenous traditions since they tended to regard the irrational as evidence of ethnic authenticity. He railed against European representation of black people in particular and wrote in opposition: "I am constructed from the irrational, I wade in the irrational. Up to the neck in the irrational."¹²⁶

He wished to be free of the weight of representations that left the black person no other self-image than that of being a savage or cannibal. Thus, Fanon confronted any idea, movement or practice that sought to reinforce colonial representations of the "other". We can thus conclude that if Fanon was critical of the nationalists' contempt for local histories,¹²⁷ he was similarly anxious not to produce a flawed national culture which would be organized entirely around local knowledge, ethnic loyalties and ancestral bonds.¹²⁸ Sekyi-Otu argued that Fanon was anxious not to under-estimate how "the orgy of reconciliation and fraternity is contradicted by the atavistic and centrifugal sources from which the countryside acquires its self-understanding and derives its impulse towards insurrection: a narrow and passionate traditionalism, the inchoate and intractable process of rumor and folkloric memory. The country's spontaneous

¹²³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 112.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹²⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 123.

¹²⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 115.

¹²⁸ Ato Sekyi-Out, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, 167.

rebellion is inspired all too often by religiosity, opposition to innovation, and rumors of repressive measures unleashed by government against the peasantry."¹²⁹

ENGAGING FANON ON RELIGION

Fanon acknowledged the force of tradition and of the sacred in the (anti)colonial context, whether settler, nationalist or indigenous. Located in a political context where tradition was largely described and organised around ethnicity, Fanon sought to develop a totalising humanism, and he called for the "liquidation of regionalism and of tribalism"... and suggested that such... "liquidation is the preliminary for the unification of the people".¹³⁰ In his aggressive critique of Fanon, Christopher Miller introduced a definition of ethnicity as "a sense of identity and difference among peoples, founded on a fiction of origin and descent and subject to forces of politics, commerce, language and religious culture".¹³¹ Thus Miller viewed Fanon's imposition of the "new nation culture" on Algerian and African traditions as an act of epistemic violence. Fanon regarded human life as isolated, as having dignity and value without reference to the transcendent or supernatural, thus he applied humanist values to all. It was precisely this *revolutionary* humanism that was at the heart of Fanon's conception of the transformed and self-determining "new man". He wrote:

NO to the butchery of what is most human to man: freedom... To educate man is to be actional, preserving in all his relation his respect for the basic values that constitute a human world, it is the prime task of him who, having taken thought, prepares to act.¹³²

¹²⁹ Ibid. 168-169.; see also Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 120.

¹³⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 74.

¹³¹ Christopher Miller, *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), 35.

¹³² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 222.

Sekyi-Otu argued that Fanon would never have joined the “nationalist to smash into submission all recalcitrant figures of tradition, ethnicity, (and) difference.”¹³³ He pointed out that Jack Woodis, in his *New Theories of Revolution*, was of the view that Fanon was too sympathetic towards the chiefs because Fanon regarded indigenous traditions as the authentic, organic resistance to the force of western modernity that overran the cities and the native bourgeoisie.¹³⁴ He also pointed to Jock McCulloch’s argument that Fanon so romanticized the peasant that he produced a “peasant messianism” wherein the peasant became the noble savage.¹³⁵ Sekyi-Otu concluded that in the final analysis Fanon was not ethnicist enough for Miller and not ethical enough for McCulloch.

Richard Onwuanibe suggested that the emergence of Fanon’s ‘new man’ did in fact have a slightly longer and rather eclectic history. He referred to the ‘new man’ of the Christian tradition, generally articulated in terms of the redemptive grace of Christ, and he pointed to the Marxist vision of the ‘new man’ as a condition of redemption from the alienation brought about by capitalist exploitation. He concluded that: “Fanon’s vision of the new man shares in this powerfully messianic vision.”¹³⁶ Fanon’s conception of alienation referred to the processes whereby acts of oppression created conditions that divorced the subject from his or her humanness. It is through his interrogating of the mundane that Fanon’s engagement with the question of religion can be distilled. As suggested above, it is through reading his response to colonialism’s devaluing of everyday aspects of native or indigenous culture – work, leisure and religion – that we see what value Fanon attributed to the religious life of the colonized.

Fanon considered every act of domination as contributing to the development of a colonised mind, pacified through multiple strategies, including force, which

¹³³ Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, 44.

¹³⁴ Jack Woodis, *New Theories of Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 43.

¹³⁵ Jock Mc Culloch, *Black Souls, White Artifact: Fanon's Critical Psychology and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 158 and 204.

¹³⁶ Richard Onwuanibe, *A Critique of Revolutionary Humanism: Frantz Fanon* (St Louis: Warren H Green Inc., 1983), 29.

“produces as its residue a debilitating self-doubt”.¹³⁷ Fanon viewed alienation as intrinsic to the colonial condition, primarily defined as loss of self, desire, rootedness, beliefs and values. Drawing on Hegel and Marx he developed an understanding of alienation or psychic rupture as occurring both at the level of spirit, as well as at the level of socio-political condition. Throughout *The Wretched of the Earth* one is struck by the intimate relationship between the psychiatric institution and the social world of colonialism. Religion, therefore, is viewed as exacerbating this condition of alienation.

Colonialism produced a simultaneous spiritual and material exploitation and thus for Fanon national independence reversed these conditions that made possible the transformation to the ‘new man’.¹³⁸ In *Black Skin, Whites Mask* Fanon argued that the native was over-determined by myth and representations largely derived from the contemporary European imagination.¹³⁹ He suggested that this alienation could be reversed through a pro-active acceptance of the self, and then through participation in armed resistance to the unrelenting brutality of colonialism.¹⁴⁰ However, Sekyi-Otu asked whether “in the postcolonial nation’s envisaged acts of redescription and self-narration, is there any respect in Fanon’s texts for codes and conventions fashioned in response to irreducibly ethnic contexts, hopes and fears. Or does Fanon’s program promote, if not a destructive attitude toward ethnic idioms, at least a sort of piracy, an illicit appropriation of ethnic particulars for the national integration of narrative institutions?”¹⁴¹ At the end of *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon called his comrades to abandon old dreams and to say farewell to former beliefs. In developing a new narrative of liberation he recalled the moral redundancy of the European’s “spiritual adventure” which sought the advancement of a few at the expense of people from every corner of the earth.

¹³⁷ Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul White Artifacts*, 128-129.

¹³⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, 179.

¹³⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 116.

¹⁴⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 74.

¹⁴¹ Ato Sekyi-Out, *Fanon’s Dialectic of Experience*, 40.

Finally he marked the beginning of this narrative of self-fashioning by pointing to the spiritual disintegration of Europe.¹⁴² Drawing on George Sorel's helpful conception of myth as "not descriptions of things, but expressions of a determination to act," Robyn Dane suggested that it is this aspect of myth that "offers a respite where sanity and a sense of the inviolable sacred can be rejuvenated."¹⁴³ While some scholars have argued that myth must be understood as the intellectual expression of the religious experience, it can also be viewed as essentially a medium through which sentiments of the sacred are expressed and made public, such as we are reminded by Jonathan Z. Smith when he remarked "there is no primordium... it is all history."¹⁴⁴ Malinowski proposed that myth must be understood not so much in terms of its narrative content but rather by more functionalist terms, for instance, as a charter for social action.¹⁴⁵ Fanon was deeply aware that the myth of the black Other, wove black identity "out of a thousand details, anecdotes and stories."¹⁴⁶

Throughout much of *Black Skin, White Masks* he sought to systematically disprove and dispel the myths about blacks as essentially "primitive", such as those advanced by Henry Drummond, a well travelled nineteenth-century evangelical Christian. Drummond sought to combine contemporary evolutionary theories with romantic notions of the "primitive". He observed that "here in his virgin simplicity dwells primeval man, without clothes, without civilization, without learning, without religion – the genuine child of nature, thoughtless, careless and contented."¹⁴⁷ Such enduring representations of the black other were very much at the fore of Fanon's mind when he argued that racism had corrupted what would be otherwise normal human relations. He sought to distance himself from

¹⁴² Ibid., 235.

¹⁴³ Robyn Dane, "When Mirrors Turns Lamp: Frantz Fanon as Cultural Visionary" *Africa Today* Vol.41:2 (1994): 77

¹⁴⁴ Jonathan Z Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xiii.

¹⁴⁵ Seth D Kunin, *Religion: The Modern Theories* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 215.

¹⁴⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 111.

¹⁴⁷ Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 142.

any intellectual or political pursuits of a primordial black identity because his assertion that blacks are also modern, rational and secular formed the foundation on which he built his theory of self-recognition and national culture.

Fanon created sufficient distance between his narrative of the 'new man' and Africanist notions of cultural legitimacy because cultural tradition could and had been used both to legitimate and to contest socio-legal categorization. He argued that such claims invariably invoked static and monadic representations of the past to legitimate their particular visions for the future.¹⁴⁸ Huston Smith observed that the term 'traditional' was historically used to refer to "an entire category of people whose behaviour and thinking are portrayed negatively... seen as conservative, backward and pre-literate,... It is therefore important to realize that when practices are termed 'traditional' this is never simply a statement of objective fact."¹⁴⁹ Fanon seemed unable to resolve the matter of ethnic or cultural tradition and thus settled on a paradoxical response thereto. While he clearly regarded tradition as a site around which to organize the rural polity, he nonetheless viewed it as a force that could disrupt and undermine the solidarity of the national culture.

Despite his reservations about the native's susceptibility towards the spiritual, and their loyalty to traditional values, Fanon upheld the rural poor as the moral conscience of the nationalist struggle. Fanon wrote in *Wretched of the Earth* in an apparent revision of Marx, that: "In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure... Everything up to and including the very nature of pre-capitalist society, so well explored by Marx, must here be thought out again."¹⁵⁰ Whilst class in the context of the colonies had to be considered a primary category of analysis, Fanon's overriding anxiety was that the peasantry, through lack of participation in the struggle for liberation, would remain a passive class or

¹⁴⁸ Andrew Spiegel, "Struggling With Tradition in South Africa" in *Social Constructions of the Past: Representation and Power*, eds. George C. Bond and Angela Gilliam (London: Routledge, 1994), 186-187.

¹⁴⁹ Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*, 56.

¹⁵⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 31.

that they would “fall back into” radical, religious conservatism.¹⁵¹ Thus for Fanon the native societies could be understood only in terms of class disparity and that the race problem could only be understood and solved as a facet of the human problem which suggested that he envisioned liberation as culminating in a classless national culture.¹⁵²

The unresolved conception of the peasantry as an underclass or as the indigenous polity in Fanon's work, found expression in the very last lines of Onwuanibe's *Critique of Revolutionary Humanism: Frantz Fanon*. Onwuanibe ended his text by raising questions about Fanon's apparent reluctance to attend to material conditions and indigenous values in Africa. Besides his appeals for a serious treatment of the native traditions, Onwuanibe read Fanon's repudiation of indigenous cultural tradition as evidence that Fanon could be regarded as at once Orientalist and revolutionary. He could be regarded as Orientalist insofar as he dismissed local tradition and yet he was equally able to propose the reinvention of national culture in the interest of the struggle for liberation. Neil Lazarus argued that in “On National Culture”, Fanon recognised the registers of various pre-colonial cultural practices when he referred to the “wonderful Songhai civilisation”¹⁵³ but also that he saw such pre-colonial registers as a primitive stage that needed to be transcended because “today the Songhais are underfed and illiterate, thrown between sky and water with empty heads and empty eyes”.¹⁵⁴ Finally, Onwuanibe's calls for the recognition of the persistence of traditions as not so much an ethno-centric appeal for originary legitimacy, as it would have been an observation about the resilience of the indigenous in the face of homogenising nationalist projects, whether of the European modernist, or pan-Africanist variety.

¹⁵¹ Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul White Artifacts*, 153.; see also Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 169.

¹⁵² David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Life*, 483.

¹⁵³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 168.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.* 168.

It is in "On National Culture" that Fanon's ideas of culture and tradition were refined, and we come to recognize the extent to which Fanon's ideas replicate some of the errors of the "West's civilising mission" insofar as his passion for a "new man" and a "new world" leads him to set aside or manipulate parochial or indigenous institutions.¹⁵⁵ Homi Bhabha, expressed similar concerns about Fanon's neglect of native religious and moral values but he concluded that this may have been largely as a result of the nationalitarian character of Fanon's liberation discourse. Bhabha did however acknowledge that this nonetheless rendered Fanon, both a historicist and a representationalist.¹⁵⁶ It seems that these acts of production, subversion, and resistance were primarily contestations over the means and mechanism of representation of the Other, whether oriental, native or domestic. Fanon understood that because religion, custom and tradition continually reinforced colonial assertions of the black other as primitive, savage and irrational, the solution rested in gaining mastery over the meaning of those representations or in expelling them from the liberation struggle altogether.

Griselda Pollock and Rizika Parker in *Framing Feminism* offered a broad definition of representations when they suggested that it assumed its meaning from the relationships between a single image and its relation to the total cultural environment of images and social belief systems. They went on to suggest that such images acquire power when particular connotations prevail as preferred meaning, such as the idea of the black as irrational and without religion. These ideas then form the dominant order of sense as a regime of truth about a particular culture or social group. Finally Pollock and Parker observed that representations are "notions of images whose meanings derive from conscious intentions of their maker give way to an understanding of the social and

¹⁵⁵ Eric San Juan, "An intervention into Cultural Studies" in *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Anthony Alessandrini (London: Routledge, 1999), 132.

¹⁵⁶ Homi Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (ed.) 1990, 302.

ideological networks within which meanings are socially produced and secured."¹⁵⁷

In this regard I believe that Francois Verges overstated Fanon's interest in Algerian Islam when she argued in her essay "Chains of Madness, Chains of Colonialism" that Fanon uncritically believed in the reconstitution of the "social and cultural organisation of Muslim society."¹⁵⁸ Nonetheless, it is precisely this refashioning of the indigenous that Gayatri Spivak referred to when she warned postcolonial theorists to "watch out for the continuing construction of the subaltern." She cautioned theorists to not dismiss the fact that representations of the native inhabited not only the texts of empire, but also narratives of nationalism.¹⁵⁹ It seemed that Fanon saw religious constituencies as only useful once reformed. He believed that only once religious belief and practices were "bracketed off" could these traditions possibly act as resources that could be used in the advancement of the struggle against colonialism.

In his essay "On National Culture" Fanon drew attention to the unrelenting force of colonialism in its determination to "maintain the Negro as savage".¹⁶⁰

Although he general critiqued the colonialist tendency to dismiss national diversity by simply referring to all people of the continent as "negroes" (blacks), Fanon focused particularly on those representations that sought to fix the native as superstitious, fanatical, and engaged in frenzied ritual. Fanon understood that these representations served to denote the indigenous as "primitive" and non-rational. That Fanon regarded these images and representations in primarily religious terms was further evidenced by his remark that the accursed was

¹⁵⁷ Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker, *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement* (London: Pandora Books, 1987), 126.

¹⁵⁸ Françoise Verges, "Chains of Madness, Chains of Colonialism: Fanon and Freedom" in *The Facts of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read (Seattle: Bay Press, 1996), 59.

¹⁵⁹ Gayatri Spivak, "Can The Subaltern Speak" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 295.

¹⁶⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 170.

“weighed down by the curse of God”.¹⁶¹ While on the one hand he condemned European representations of black people, Fanon was aware of the dissonance between indigenous cosmology and (anti) colonial modernity. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon wrote that the “Negro’s behaviour makes him akin to an obsessive neurotic type”¹⁶² which reflected his conception that the cultural alienation of the colonized was in part the result of a particular religious worldview.

In “On National Culture” he distanced himself from such essentialist notions of a black universality and argued that “every culture is first and foremost national.”¹⁶³ He insisted that without modernity the native communities would at once “fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality.”¹⁶⁴ He argued that European representations were developed out of a conception of humanness that equated being human with having rational religion. Thus the native black, lacking religion, was viewed as more base and animal-like, and the Arab-Muslim’s beliefs supposedly predisposed him to barbarity. Fanon, seeing no way to rationally challenge these representations, proposed that the native engage in what he termed the fighting phase, when the native – having tried to excite the people, now “shake the people” – would become an awakener of the people to produce the eschatological vision of the new man.¹⁶⁵

Whilst he recognized the role of religion in the production of representations of the native, Fanon remained dismissive of local knowledge forms, leaving little possibility for them to consciously inform the anti-colonial, nationalist project. Fanon argued that the old methods of passive resistance no longer applied and that in the new context of armed resistance, tradition needed to change. First he suggested that while the native intellectual sought to capture and articulate the cultural changes of the indigenous people, the intellectual was always out of

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 170.

¹⁶² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 60.

¹⁶³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 174.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 169.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 179.

date because “at the very moment the native intellectual is anxiously trying to create a cultural work, he fails to realise that he is utilizing techniques and languages that are borrowed from the stranger in the country.”¹⁶⁶

This argument allowed Fanon to dismiss any project concerned with indigenous tradition and to assert that such strategies detracted from the struggle for national liberation. He insisted that the colonialist “keeps up tribal rivalries through religion”¹⁶⁷ and thus Fanon argued that “the desire to attach oneself to tradition and bring abandoned traditions to life again does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one’s own people.”¹⁶⁸ Fanon here made another important assertion when he drew a distinction between culture and custom. He argued that custom – understood as static “mummified fragments” – caused not just the simplification of culture but it essentially resulted in the deterioration of culture. From the use of the terms “hypnotized” and “outworn contrivances” Fanon appeared to conclude that custom denoted uncritical and irrational ritual practice.

He moved swiftly to assert that the significance of tradition changes during the armed struggle. Also, he seemed to imply that because custom, which he uses interchangeably with tradition, “made up the technique of passive resistance in the past may... (and should) be radically condemned.” Thus Fanon reiterated his view that religion and customary practices have no significant role in the anti-colonial struggle because they tended to undermine the struggle for national independence by ‘hypnotizing’ the indigenous people with practices of superstitious beliefs, witchcraft and maraboutism.

Fanon found it difficult to accept that whilst within a particular social hierarchy people may be differently resourced in terms of the level of self-assertion that they would be able to generate, they nonetheless devised acts of self-

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.* 180.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 129.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 180.

determination within the context of colonial social relations.¹⁶⁹ This tension was illustrated by Sherry Ortner who suggested that agency is concerned with “the mediation between conscious motives and unexpected outcomes, between historically marked individuals and events on the one hand, and cumulative reproduction and transformations that are a result of everyday practices on the other.”¹⁷⁰

Slisli argued that when Fanon joined the Algerian struggle for independence, he failed to appreciate that the indigenous Islamic movements of the region had always maintained an anti-colonial character, whether by intent or custom. For Fanon it could only be through violence that the native would find integration from the alienation of the Self brought about by colonialism. In the anti-colonial movements this violence became mediated and institutionalized through “armed struggle”. The political reality was seen to be the ‘first truth’¹⁷¹ of the nation and thus for Fanon it was the artist, performer and the poet – the guardian of the new cultural and moral order – who had to give voice to the people’s revolution. This was made evident by his conclusion that “It is not enough to try and free oneself by repeating proclamations and denials.”¹⁷²

Having “bracketed off” traditional religious customs from the struggle for liberation, and replaced them with popular cultural agents, he sought to integrate the local material reality with his universal humanism when he asserted that “to fight for national culture... is to fight for the liberation of the nation.”¹⁷³ He later argued that by delving into the glorious African past in order to expose the false representations produced by colonialism was a futile exercise unless it was directly related to the national armed struggle. He instead offered an

¹⁶⁹ Maud Eduards, “Women’s Agency and Collective Action,” *Women’s Studies International Forum*, Vol.7, Nos. 2/3 (1994):181-186.

¹⁷⁰ Sherry Ortner, “Specifying Agency: The Comaroffs and their Critics” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 3.1 (2001): 76-84.

¹⁷¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 181.

¹⁷² *ibid*, 182.

¹⁷³ *ibid*, 187.

apocalyptic call for activists to turn towards the highly charged “zone of occult instability” because it was the site of value instability where ‘the people’ live.

In apparent contrast to his earlier dismissal of the religious as irrational and hypnotizing, he assumed an overtly eschatological tone when he claimed that it was here – in the zone of value instability – “that our souls are crystallized and our perceptions and our lives are transfused with light.”¹⁷⁴ Of course this statement suggested more about Fanon’s aesthetic of transformation, which will be developed in the next chapter, but one can nonetheless detect something of his paradoxical conception of the function of religion in the anti-colonial struggle. Fanon employed an idea of religion reminiscent of Geertz’ notion that religion was partly about “formulating conceptions of the general order of existence” but Fanon also reflected an understanding of religion as operating in emotional, political, philosophical and material dimensions.¹⁷⁵

Fanon viewed the narratives of tribalism produced by colonialist and nativist as the primary threats to liberation. He argued that it was only through the interventions of native intellectuals that a reinvented national culture may become an organising category in the interest of the struggle for liberation. He suggested that “when a people undertake an armed struggle or even a political struggle against a relentless colonialism, the significance of tradition changes.”¹⁷⁶ The intellectuals participation in the nationalist project, according to Fanon, minimized the possibility of attaching “oneself to tradition or bring abandoned tradition to life”¹⁷⁷ because not only would it have meant going against the modernity and ‘the current of history’ but Fanon saw it as essentially opposing the interest of one’s people. For Fanon, this proposed revision of national culture offered the only possible relationship between indigenous culture and the nationalist struggle against alienation.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 183.

¹⁷⁵ Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton ASA Monographs 3 (London: Tavistock, 1973), 4.

¹⁷⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 180.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid*, 180.

Elsewhere in his essay "On National Culture" Fanon demonstrated how through the intervention of the native intellectual – artist, poet, performer – traditions can be changed so as to aid the struggle for independence. Fanon suggested that one such change of tradition occur in the production of pottery and other cultural artifacts. He spoke of the skills, craftsmanship and product -previously looked down upon as primitive - as being produced in a savage style. Thus such savage 'acts' came to denote assertions of resistance to oppression. Fanon's reinvention of colonialist representations made possible the sacred character of the nationalist project without conceding to what he perceived to be the conservative demands for indigenism. Thus the sacred was produced from the mobilisation of individual subjectivities through themes of collectivity thus highlighting the eschatological character of Fanon's nationalist project. Although Fanon sought to "bracket off" religion he recognized that his nationalist project needed to be connected to local conditions in order to produce the desired material and political consequences.

Fanon sought to differentiate between the "great revealed religions" of orthodox Catholicism or Islam, and the indigenous or mystical traditions. Although Fanon hoped to reduce the impact of religion in the public (intellectual and political) sphere he was particularly prejudiced against the indigenous, and maraboutic traditions. As I have argued, Fanon realized that he could not simply wish religion away, or dismiss it as "primitive" and anti-revolutionary, and therefore he sought to expand his idea of modernity and transformation to include the sacred content that resides in both "primitive" and "revealed" religions. With this in mind I propose that Fanon developed an aesthetic of transformation that allows us to better appreciate his ambivalent engagements with religion.

Fanon developed his aesthetic of transformation as being concerned with those elements of human aspiration that in an immediate fashion motivate and focus our attention on imagined landscapes that transcend material conditions. His

conception of transformation suggested a continuity between a utopian vision and material reality to produce a critique of colonial conditions without reducing them to emotional and material forces. In this way he avoided equating religion with either specific institutions, or faith in general.

The tension between consolidating political developments concerned with the end of colonial rule and the recognition of indigenous traditions was mirrored by the ambivalent conceptions of religion in Fanon's work. This tension was not unique to Fanon. Consequently his failure to address the persistence of the sacred threatened to undermine his vision of a postcolonial 'national culture'. What was peculiar to Fanon was that while throughout much of *The Wretched of the Earth* he cautioned against nationalistic disregard for the indigenous – he argued that exclusion and containment of indigenous religious traditions would lead to religious and ethnic fragmentation within the nation – he suggested that religion was essentially opposed to the formation of a national culture.¹⁷⁸ Fanon's anxious determination to disprove the many metropolitan 'details, anecdotes and stories' about the savage who lived without religion, or practiced "primitive religion", set him on a path where he would seek to assert an idea of black self-recognition, so determined not to privilege the indigenous that he slipped into a romantic exoticizing of the black subject.

In failing to resolve his ambivalent conception of religion in the postcolony Fanon could not imagine a postcolonial 'national culture' that would not be under the threat of religious or ethnic divisions. This meant that his rational configuration of the postcolonial national culture was characterized by the fear of divisions defined by religion and ethnicity and as such in his attempts to 'bracket off' religion from the postcolonial public he re-invoked the kind of 'details, anecdotes and stories' that Europeans had produced about its black other, and which he had so adamantly sought to dispel.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 180-181.

CHAPTER FIVE

ETHICS AND AESTHETIC OF TRANSFORMATION

In the life and work of Frantz Fanon we find not only resistance to colonialism but also a profound study of individual and social transformation. The transformation of the individual and the social collectivity stands out as a central theme in Fanon's reflection on the self-recognition of the colonized individual and the coming-to-independence of colonial nations. Thus I will consider the ethics and aesthetics of transformation in the anti-colonial rhetoric of Frantz Fanon as his remedy for the religious and ethnic divisions which he believed colonialism had placed at the heart of the colonial social order. I have argued that, although Fanon grew up in Martinique and had now joined the struggle for independence in Algeria, both countries with strict racial and religious hierarchies, he nonetheless maintained a deeply ambivalent – and at times dismissive – relationship to religion. Having assumed a utilitarian approach to institutional religion, and maintaining a modernist view of indigenous or charismatic religion, Fanon sought to produce a narrative of sacred resistance through privileging the black body as an instrument of social transformation. I will draw specific attention to the fact that in producing anti-colonial discourses of self-recognition and national cohesion Frantz Fanon not only relied on modernism, the mood for change that characterized the period immediately after the Second World War, but he actively produced an aesthetic of transformation as sacred.

In the previous chapter I sought to illustrate the ways that Fanon engaged with religion, the ways in which he differentiated between orthodox and indigenous religions, between world religion and “primitive religion”, between urban and rural traditions, public and personal piety, and finally I consider his anxiety that religion undermines the anti-colonial struggle. Having been educated and raised

in the context of Martinique's orthodox Catholicism,¹ Fanon came to regard Catholicism and later Islam as the 'great revealed religions', while he viewed indigenous religions as "primitive", emotional and 'regimes of family' that go back to the old ways, and as ultimately disruptive to the revolution against colonialism. Fanon argued that religion, in its various permutations, has historically been complicit in the production of the representation of native peoples, whether organised around colonial Catholicism or against Islam and indigenous traditions. This historically intimate relationship between religious constituencies, discourses and representation of the black or Arab 'other' in part, accounts for the persistence of the sacred in the narratives of resistance to colonialism as well as the way the sacred persists in the national culture of the postcolony.

I will demonstrate the relationship between Fanon's aesthetic of transformation and his proposed socio-diagnostic or therapeutic models. I argue that through a broad reading of Fanon, the therapist, we begin to see how he employed the idea of transformation as sacred through highlighting its function as stubborn, volatile, infectious and vital.

This chapter will discuss Fanon's aesthetic of transformation in relation to his engagements with religion through a focusing on the prominence of the body and national culture as the sites of the production of a narrative of the sacred. Fanon argued that although the enslaved body was historically brutalized, that in resistance the brutality becomes inverted and, in pursuit of a national culture, would be turned against the colonizer in an act of redemptive violence. Notwithstanding the fact that indigenous traditions were identified as a means of undermining native opposition to colonialism, Fanon, recognizing the salience of indigenous tradition for the colonized masses, bracketed off religion to produce a national culture that offers vision, meaning and cohesion of a utopian postcolonial state. However, in the pursuit of a national culture, the body becomes the main site of contesting and effecting the sacred. For example, the

¹ Katherine Browne, *Creole Economics: Caribbean Cunning Under the Flag* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 33.

Antillean celebration of the body made possible a connection between the present and a sacred African past. Likewise, the surrender of the Algerian body in acts of anti-colonial violence made possible a vision of a future where the sacred is activated through black self-recognition and not through indigenous religion, Islam or Catholicism.

Fanon believed that while Catholicism at times overtly sanctioned colonialism and parentalism over the natives, he saw also how negritude and the nativist recovery of indigenous practices served to reinforce particular representations of Africans as “primitive” and pre-modern. By this conception religion, is not intellectual but social insofar as it offers rituals, symbols and sentiments that serve to anchor its believers to their community. Finally he viewed all the faith communities in the colonial context as forces that in different ways undermine the anti-colonial struggle. However, Fanon would come to recognize the force and prevalence of religion in the colonial context and, as such, sought to produce a narrative of the sacred, of the transformation of the self and society.² He sought to reverse what he regarded as the intellectual and spiritual poverty which resulted from colonialism.³ He was keen not to fall back on orthodox conceptions of religion which largely sought to explain religion as a system made up of knowledge and beliefs, of arts and morals, tools and technology, language, laws, customs, legends, myths, and other components that together come to give sacred meaning to a community.

Fanon’s idea of ‘national culture’ evoked sets of symbols that simultaneously draw on orthodox as well as indigenous traditions, and in this way was a reflection of Geertz’s conception of religion as a cultural system.⁴ Clifford Geertz suggested that religion can then be understood as “a set of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motives in men, by

² Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakom Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 168.

³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Penguin, 1967), 148.

⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of Earth*, 193-197.

formulating conceptions of a general order of existence, and clothing these conceptions with an aura of factuality, that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."⁵ In Fanon's proposed production of a 'national culture' the poet, artist and performer function as the ritual specialists of the nation because they produce word, image and performance - *text, icon, and ritual* through which imagined collectivities are articulated. Talal Asad argued that such manufacturing of the sacred is a prerequisite of secular nationalism, thus making it possible for these ritual specialists of the postcolonial nation to organise individual subjectivities to produce Geertz's aura of factuality.⁶

In this regard Fanon argued that the transformation of the self and society occurs in the zone of occult instability where the people dwell, and that it would be from there that the anti-colonial struggle would become invested with the required spiritual and moral resources.⁷ He believed that because "racism bloats and disfigures the face of the culture that practices it"⁸ colonialism produced a fractured modernity with the consequence that the colonized cannot find refuge in ordinary social anonymity because the facts of blackness "seizes and pervert the very foundations of anonymous interaction" that marks ordinary human interaction.⁹ As Maldonado-Torres observed:

in this world, psychic pathologies do not mask themselves in the symbolic; instead, they find expression in the real. The colonial anti-black world in which Fanon lived was not simply formed by human beings, but by two fields: the colonizer and the colonized, the white and the black. Every form of human relation, every feature of human life exhibited marks of this Manichean opposition. Fanon lived, then, in a very peculiar world: a world where the

⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90.

⁶ Talal Asad, "Religion, State and Nationalism" in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, eds. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 187.

⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 183.

⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Towards the Africa Revolution*, trans. Haakom Chevalier (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), 37.

⁹ Lewis Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 57.

pathological came to occupy the space of the normal.¹⁰

It is in this context that Fanon attempted to produce an aesthetic of transformation of the black self and the colonized society that was essentially secular in character. Having “bracketed off” indigenous and ‘revealed’ religions from the anti-colonial struggle, Fanon asserted in the concluding lines of *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* that “it is true that independence produces the spiritual and material conditions for the reconversion of man.”¹¹

In his introduction to *Conversion to Modernities*, Peter van der Veer suggested that conversion and modernity have a number of things in common, starting with the fact that they both view change in a positive light. He cited Raymond Williams to highlight the fact that in pre-enlightenment Europe change was understood in primarily negative terms before going on to argue that although “the authentication of the present is often [understood] in terms of a continuity with the past ...in both modernity and conversion there is a deep ambivalence about the past.”¹² This ambivalence is palpable in Fanon's writing,¹³ not unlike the trend which Birgit Meyer saw as attributable to social scientists' tendency to increasingly understand conversion in terms of rationalization and disenchantment.¹⁴ To further understand Fanon's conception of religion, I will explore the ways in which Fanon came to understand and develop his ideas of individual and collective transformation as a sacred enterprise. For Fanon, colonialism did not only scar the psyches of the colonizer and the colonized but it also marked social relations with an idea of race as the primary organizing and interpretive principle. Accordingly, he devised a framework that sought to clarify the relation between the personal and the social, the colonizer and European

¹⁰ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University, 2008) 95.

¹¹ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 179.

¹² Peter van der Veer, “Introduction” in *Conversion to Modernities*, ed. Peter van der Veer (New York: Routledge, 1996), 18.

¹³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 122-125.

¹⁴ Birgit Meyer, “Modernity and Enchantment” in *Conversion to Modernities*, ed. Peter van der Veer (New York: Routledge, 1996), 199.

hegemony, the colonial subject and their supposed inferiority. Fanon exposed how in the colonial context these polarized relations reflect a corruption of the impulse for recognition of humanity.

Fanon developed an ethic and aesthetic of transformation as a possible way to recover the self, the nation and humanity. One way to understand Fanon's thoughts on transformation is to read *Black Skin, White Mask* as concerned with the politics of narcissism to address the transformation of the individual, and *Wretched of the Earth* as a narrative of nationalism focused on the transformation of the nation as a social collectivity. Though simplistic, this framing does help to highlight the different contexts in which Fanon's engagements with religion and the transformation materialised. I argue that Fanon did not start with a clear conception of how the colonized would move from alienation to self-recognition but rather that the terms of his aesthetic of transformation emerged through meaningful engagement with various religious and cultural communities.

EPIC OF TRANSFORMATION

Gary Wilder argued that "The Lived Experience of the Black" is a revision or development of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal* (*Notebook on a Return to a Native Land*) insofar as it displays a number of remarkable similarities.¹⁵ However, this should not come as a surprise. Césaire was a highly regarded scholar in the fields of race and identity politics a generation before Fanon, and served as both Fanon's teacher and mentor at his *Lycee Schoelcher* in Forte de France. That Fanon drew substantially on Césaire's work is therefore not at all surprising. Michael Dash in his short biography of Edouard Glissant, a contemporary of Fanon, argued that *Black Skin, White Masks* "is inextricable from Césaire's earlier text."¹⁶ However, one would be overstating the significance of

¹⁵ Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), also see Gary Wilder, "Race, Reason, Impasse: Césaire, Fanon and the Legacy of Emancipation," *Radical History Review* Issue 90 (Fall 2004): 31-61.

¹⁶ Michael Dash, *Édouard Glissant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8.

this relationship with the suggestion that there is a necessarily dependent relationship between the two.

In his article, "Reason, Race, Impasse", Wilder attempted to identify the continuities between the Fanon's and Césaire's texts by suggesting that they essentially dealt with the same issues when confronting their social alienation and the explorations of nativism. They both also share a frustration at a lack of clear resolution.¹⁷ Wilder ends up over-simplifying the commonalities and reducing their differences by reifying Césaire as a native cultural nationalist and Fanon as a revolutionary political nationalist. Of course, there are many different ways to read the relationship between the two men, their political interests and their texts, which I propose, in part, to explore below. One thing is clear, in the end, regardless of the trajectory of this epic, Fanon concluded that "it is the white man who creates the negro but it is the negro who creates negritude".¹⁸ Thus, in resistance to colonialism's epistemic and material violence, negritude does become a weapon, a weapon of recovery, of self-assertion, and the weapon by which the black man turned his existential crisis on the Paris tram into an eschatological moment.

In both *Cahier* and *Black Skin, White Masks* the authors focus on Martinique and its ambivalent status as a colony of France. Fanon, without revealing a great deal about his own experience of the island beyond general reference to family and education, framed the island primarily in terms of its relationship to metropolitan France. Cilas Kemedjio and R. H. Mitsch argued that both *Cahier* and Isaac Julien's film adaptation of *Peau Noire* unfolds in three stages, stating that: "first, a focus on Martinique, then on the confrontation with hegemonic power, and the subsequent celebration of African identity, and finally on the identification with the wretched of the earth."¹⁹ I propose that this outward

¹⁷ Gary Wilder "Race, Reason, Impasse: Césaire, Fanon, and the Legacy of Emancipation" *Radical History Review* Issue 90 (Fall 2004): 31-61.

¹⁸ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 47.

¹⁹ Cilas Kemedjio and R. H. Mitsch, review of *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Masks*, a film directed by Isaac Julien, "When the Detour Leads Home: The Urgency of Memory and the

journey is symbolic of the inner, transformative journey being undertaken by Fanon and Césaire. Fanon showed how as a result of the “gaze over myself, discovering my blackness, my ethnic characteristics” he was deafened and overwhelmed.²⁰ This was not unlike Césaire's sense of feeling deranged when he too found himself confronted by French metropolitan racism on a Paris tram. Fanon was frustrated that he was reduced to being regarded as less than human and defined in terms of cannibalism and fetishism.

What both Fanon and Césaire found at the end of their respective critiques is “the doubleness of colonial racism, [and] that it is at once rational and irrational, assimilating and differentiating, phobic and phallic.”²¹ Although both writers succeeded in capturing the profound sense of alienation experienced by the colonized people of this French Caribbean island, due to their class differences their respective texts depicted the conditions of Martinique from distinctly different vantage points. In reading Fanon, one is struck not only by his identification of the conditions of alienation, but also how his analysis exposed the European psyche as deeply ambivalent and unstable. This aspect of his work is further developed by postcolonial theorists such as Rattansi who highlight the conflicting interests that inform the production of particular representations of the colonized. Rattansi argued that the colonial encounter “did make western man definitionally non-eastern and handed him a self-image and a worldview which were basically responses to colonialism. The discovery of the Orient... was designed to expel the other Orient which had been part of medieval European consciousness.”²² Fanon found that as a black person his self-image was constantly redefined through interactions with colonialists by means of thousand of stories and anecdotes about what constituted blackness. He found that there was little room for the possibility of a self-determining black individual.

Liberation Imperative from Aimé Césaire to Frantz Fanon,” *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (autumn 1998): 191-203.

²⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 112.

²¹ Gary Wilder, “Race, Reason, Impasse: Césaire, Fanon, and the Legacy of Emancipation,” *Radical History Review* 90 (2004): 31-61.

²² Ali Rattansi, “Postcolonialism and its Discontents”, *Economy and Society*, 26.4 (1999): 480-500.

Césaire remained a decisive influence on Fanon's thinking throughout his life and he was widely regarded as the intellectual and political mentor for the young Fanon. Maxim Silverman, James Arnold and Jeannie Suk respectively have argued that Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* was essentially a theoretical framing of a self-conscious anti-assimilationism which Césaire was able to illustrate through poetic imagery.²³ Abiola Irele, in commenting on Africa's a transcendental significance in Césaire's poetry, wrote that:

The African sentiment of Césaire's animates [then] his messianic vision. His experience of Africa is imaginative and symbolic, but has an active purpose. The poet assumes the role of a prophet, leading his people towards a new world of social experience and human awareness, towards a new order of existence and being.²⁴

Although he inherited an appreciation for Enlightenment humanism from Césaire, Fanon had an ambivalent relationship towards his mentor's negritude and ultimately asserted himself as violently anti-essentialist. He persistently contested the notion of an essential, unchanging black identity and he was particularly frustrated by negritude's association with religions of the ancestors.²⁵ Kobena Mercer has suggested that for Fanon, with respect to distinct racial characteristics, Europeans differentiate in order to denigrate the black other, while nativists differentiate in order to privilege and celebrate.²⁶ However, for Fanon, both acts of differentiation are problematic insofar as they tend to work with a fixed idea of what it means to be black – “haunted by a galaxy of erosive stereotypes.”²⁷ Fanon also inherited from Césaire a determination to confront

²³ Maxim Silverman, *Frantz Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 554-56. Also see James Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 9; and Jeannie Suk, *Postcolonial Paradoxes in French Caribbean Writing: Césaire, Glissant and Conde* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 28-30.

²⁴ Abiola Irele, 'Literature and Ideology in Martinique', in *Special Studies* (16), Council for international Studies, (Buffalo: SUNY, 1972), 13.

²⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 126-127.

²⁶ Kobena Mercer, "Busy in the Ruins of a Wretched Phantasia," in *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Anthony Alessandrini (London: Routledge, 1999), 200.

²⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 129.

colonial oppression and the black malaise. Both scholars envisioned a future where the black subject would be able to transcend the arresting representation put upon him by the colonialist.

Fanon wrote that “the white has woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes and stories,”²⁸ a statement which in itself suggested an awareness on the part of the writer that these ideas of the “black other” were the result of a protracted process by which the images came to be shaped through European excursions into the colonial frontier zones. Later Fanon reminded the reader of the overwhelming weight that he felt as the object of the colonial gaze: “I was all at once responsible for my body, responsible for my race, for my ancestor.”²⁹ Immediately one becomes aware of the thoughts racing through Fanon’s mind as he grappled with deciding on an appropriate response to the exclamation “look a negro” as he stood there at once dismissive and angry. However, within these few lines he managed to reveal his sense of coming to an awareness of his body, of his race and of his ancestors. This confrontation was particularly troubling for Fanon because, although he sought to lose the religion of the ancestors, he did not want to sever the link with a family or community of suffering.

Fanon’s analysis of European articulations of black otherness in terms of the body later served as the foundation upon which he built his ideas of transformation. He therefore grappled with the white gaze as a denial of his humanity, and he sought to specifically analyze the mechanisms that activated these representations. Whilst there are narrative and ideological similarities between Fanon and Césaire, I contend that the way in which Fanon read the colonial encounter, as shored up by sets of representations that drew upon the corporeal, offers a particularly revolutionary conception of meaning-making in the colonial contact zone.

²⁸ Ibid., 111.

²⁹ Ibid., 112.

Edward Said argued that these ways of speaking and thinking about the other produced images about the colonized as “primitive” or “savage”, pre-modern and child-like, and as such, were used by colonialists to legitimize political, economic and military action (in the colonial contact zone in particular).³⁰ Fanon believed that the deployment of these representations came at a cost, not only to the colonized “other”, but also to the colonizer. The self-conception of the colonizer was ambivalent and dependent insofar as it wholly relied on the colonized for recognition and meaning. However, Fanon did not simply rely on the constitutive ambivalence of the colonialist’s conception of self to undermine the authority of the stereotype, but he actively combated these representations of the colonized ‘other’ through a historicized, theorized dissection of their nature and operation.

Peter van der Veer highlighted the fact that modernity and conversion have a deep ambivalence with the past insofar as conversion in particular “came to mean a total break with the past.”³¹ Likewise, Fanon’s aesthetic of conversion of the black self came about, not through the denial of history, but precisely by turning towards the object of racism and exercising a direct ‘gazing’ upon the self – ugly and comical – and thus fixing the black experience in a narrative of opposition and resistance.

OF THERAPY AND TRANSFORMATION

It has been widely acknowledged that Fanon’s training as a psychiatric doctor was never far removed from Fanon the activist and revolutionary. He regarded his work, whether concerned with the individual or the nation, as ultimately a clinical, therapeutic endeavour, what David Macey refers to as socio-

³⁰ Edward Said, “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors”, *Critical Inquiry*, 15.2 (1989): 205-225.

³¹ Peter van der Veer, “Introduction” in *Conversion to Modernities*, 19.

diagnostics.³² At the end of this chapter I hope to demonstrate that the aesthetic of transformation in Fanon's work is at once therapeutic and religious in character.

Fanon encountered the majority of his clients or patients in the context of a violent colonial regime, a context that was also marked by a fractured modernity and a disfigured traditional polity. Sekyi-Otu argued that after Fanon considered in *The Wretched of the Earth* the pathological social and mental structures of colonialism, he pronounced a final curse on the European legacy in what amounts to an apotropaic incantation. Fanon wrote: "leave this Europe where they are never done talking of humanity, yet murder human beings everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their streets, in all the corners of the globe... When I search for humanity in the technique and style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of humanity, and an avalanche of murders."³³ Perinbam suggested that, for Fanon, when the colonized was faced with a disordered world where they are continually denied recognition they were faced with two options: either they permitted the colonizers to impose themselves on their consciousness and lives, or they would decide to break free through violent opposition.³⁴

Thus, unlike Césaire, for whom Africa served as the foundation of his eschatological vision, Fanon drew on the immediate economies of colonial violence as the foundation of his aesthetic of transformation. Perinbam suggested that Fanon's idea of "holy violence" emerged from his reading of Lucien Levy-Bruhl and Marcel Mauss' ethno-sociology during his student days. In particular, he developed Levy-Bruhl's idea of the "primitive" which was premised on the notion that the "primitive" is never separated from nature. This idea of the intimate connectedness of the "primitive" with nature was also referred to as

³² David Macey, "Fanon, Phenomenology and Race" in *Philosophies of Race and Ethnicity*, eds. Peter Osborn and Stella Sandford (London: Continuum, 2002), 29.

³³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 252.; cited in Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 182.

³⁴ Marie Perinbam, *Holy Violence* (Washington, DC: Three Continental Press, 1982), 22.

Levy-Bruhl's thesis of 'essential homogeneity'. For Perinbam, this conception of the "primitive" reinforced by rituals, theology and symbolic imagery supposedly informed the rudiments of Fanon's vision of the wholly integrated person. The Algerian peasant would become the empirical "primitive", who unlike the slave of Hegel's dialectic, who identified with the other, would rather fuse the self with objective reality. Fanon found that this offered no solution and so he proposed that the only empirical solution lay in breaking the cycle by violence. He wrote:

The violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm from the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the system of reference of the economy, the custom of dress and external life, that same violence claimed and taken over by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into the forbidden quarters. The wreck of the colonial world is henceforward a mental picture in action... the destruction of the colonial world is no more and no less the abolition of one zone, its burial in the depths of the earth or its expulsion from the country.³⁵

For Fanon, decolonization was an inherently violent endeavour because it resulted from the meeting of two forces who were opposed to each other by their very nature.³⁶ He argued that this violence characterized colonial relations, and that colonialism never tried to obscure its violent intent or interventions in the colonies. Azzedine Haddour, citing Fanon, argued that "colonialism is not a thinking machine... not a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is maintained by naked violence: 'violence is its natural state and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence.'"³⁷ He suggested that, for Fanon, violence was not a central theme but that it simply functioned to activate decolonization with the explicit purpose of breaking up the colonial condition and inaugurating the postcolonial nation.³⁸ Fanon addressed an equally fundamental concern when he asked:

³⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 31.

³⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 27-28.

³⁷ Azzedine Haddour, *The Fanon Reader* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), xv.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, xvi

By what spiritual aberration do these men, without technique, starving and enfeebled, confronted with military and economic might of the occupation, Come to believe that violence alone will free them.³⁹

In her introduction to *Postcolonial Violence, Culture and Identity in Francophone Africa and the Antilles*, Lorna Milne suggested that, for Fanon, it was only through violent engagement that the colonized would be able to throw off the burden of representation and move beyond the colonized identity. She argued that “systemic violence, then, is an integral factor in any colonial landscape.”⁴⁰ Fanon's aesthetic of transformation – though rooted in the lived experience of the black transcended the material conditions of the colonial situation, to produce a narrative of the eschatological and redemptive quality of violence. Fanon saw violence as more than a necessity to free the consciousness of the colonized, he saw it as activating a sacred, and psychic transformation: ‘the creation of the new man’. Thus moving beyond Levy-Bruhl's integrated primitive and what Senghor referred to as “primordial purity”⁴¹ Fanon made possible a humanistic integration of the alienated black.

In *A Dying Colonialism*, we observed Fanon's coming to an appreciation of the necessity of violence as he debated the matter with his FLN/ Muslim comrades. In earlier discussions of revolution Fanon regarded violent resistance as a necessary response to the excesses of colonialism; but unlike his Algerian counterparts, he initially expressed some reluctance to accept the necessity of violence. However, as the struggle and brutality continued Fanon came to recognize that “the history of the French conquest in Algeria, including the overrunning of villages by troops, the confiscation of property and the raping of women, the pillaging of the country” would only be halted by an equally

³⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 57.

⁴⁰ Lorna Milne, “Introduction” in *Postcolonial Violence, Culture and Identity in Francophone Africa and the Antilles*, ed. Lorna Milne (Bern: Peter Lang, International Academic Publishers, 2007), 9.

⁴¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 122-123.

opposing violent force.⁴² Thus Fanon's position on the necessity of violence evolved in line with his exposure to the unrelenting violence of the French towards the Algerian people. Abiola Irele observing a tangential development in Fanon's work, argued that *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, respectively, represented the theoretical and the practical phases in Fanon's thinking about violence, with a suggestion that *A Dying Colonialism* marked the transitional phase in between.⁴³ Milne observed that although Fanon, like Memmi, recognized the kind of discursive and epistemic violence produced by the representation of the black other in the colonies, he came to a deep appreciation of the enduring impact of real, physical and material violence.⁴⁴

Although, towards the end Fanon suggested that the nation may possibly serve as a social framework for the integration of the black self, it is only in the pages of *A Dying Colonialism* that we get a sense of what he envisioned as the transformation of the world. The ambivalence of *Black Skin, White Masks* may be largely due to the fact that Fanon was coming to terms with his own sense of alienation, the condition of feeling at home neither in Martinique nor in France. Celia Britton has suggested that the integration of the nation and the self was a political project, for Fanon. Disentanglement of the psycho-analytical from the political only became possible once he recognized himself as possessing an Oedipus complex of a very particular and politically charged type. She argues that Fanon's Oedipal father is not his biological father but the *colon*: the white master.⁴⁵

This restructuring of the world and the emergence of a new Algerian nation underlies Fanon's conception of violence as transformative. Irele argued that

⁴² Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 45.

⁴³ Abiola Irele, "Blackness and Modernity," Unpublished manuscript, 2008, 16.

⁴⁴ Lorna Milne, *Postcolonial Violence, Culture and Identity in Francophone Africa and the Antilles*, 11.

⁴⁵ Celia Britton, *Race and the Unconscious: Freudianism in French Caribbean Thought*, Research Monographs in French Studies 12 (Oxford: Legenda, 2002), 85.

Fanon's reflection on violence and transformation was always context bound. He went on to suggest that Fanon drew on his psychiatric practice to craft a conception of violence as a means of inner liberation, at least for the colonized.⁴⁶ He pointed to the significant influence of Césaire on Fanon, and in particular Césaire's poems *The Rebel* and *The Sun Serpent*, to demonstrate the extent to which Fanon's work can be said to represent a reformulation of Césaire's poetics of aggression into an ethic of violence. He wrote that "violence is more than a form of extasis, procuring psychic release for the individual; its true objective and moral significance reside at the collective level, as a means of liberation."⁴⁷ Thus for Fanon, by this argument, violence is transformative insofar as it facilitates the inauguration of the postcolonial nation. Through this recovery of humanity by putting it at the heart of the national culture, violence becomes redemptive. Violence can be viewed as restoring the inner life of the nation and endowing it with inner gravity and coherence. It is in this context that we might begin to explore the possible interdependence, for Fanon, of the emerging national politics and culture.

HISTORY INSCRIBED ON THE BLACK BODY

In "The Lived Experience of the Black" Fanon illustrated his aesthetic of transformation of the self not only in terms of resistance to the colonial 'gaze' but also through acts of self-fashioning. Fanon found himself on a Paris tram, like Césaire before him, where he is forced to confront his racial difference. A child calls to its parent and exclaims mommy, "look a negro!" and at once Fanon's world is permanently altered. The repetition of the expression has the effect of a deafening echo as the writer repeatedly draws the reader's attention to it. Across the few pages describing the encounter an exclamation or a variation thereof was repeated more than ten times and served as testimony to Fanon's horror. Every time it was repeated Fanon was confronted with more of the

⁴⁶ Abiola Irele, "Blackness and Modernity," 19.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 20.

thousands of stories, anecdotes and details by which the black was defined. Although he knew the “legends, stories and history” of the white gaze and their denigration of the other, in his state of shock and denial he repeated the expression in the text again and again as if to make it real to himself. This repetition also allows us to trace Fanon’s change of mood and relation to both the gaze and the exclamation. He moved from complicitous silence and amusement to confrontation and anger during these various repetitions of the identification of his otherness. Like Césaire’s transformative journey back to Martinique, Fanon here on the tram travelled inwards.

At the outset Fanon, in response to the gaze and the exclamation thereof, retreated inwards and carefully considered how he would respond to the existential confrontation. In the first instance, having realized the inescapability of his condition, that he couldn’t step out of his black skin, Fanon retreated into self-silencing. In her essay “Resisting the Heat”, an evaluation of silence as a form of resistance, Doris Sommer referred to this form of retreat as a kind of oppositional performance. Sommer argued that through the act of self-silencing and refusal the colonized subject asserts herself in a performative act of resistance.⁴⁸ Likewise, through his refusal to submit to the dominant paradigm, Fanon rejected the colonizer’s ‘thousands of details, stories and anecdotes’ by which the black had become over-determined. He composed himself, deeply conscious of the representations of the black other as threatening and savage, and he contained his anger. Instead, he wrote:

I ran an objective gaze over myself, discovering my blackness, my ethnic characteristics, and then I was deafened by cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships.⁴⁹

The recollection of this incident reflects Fanon’s acute awareness of how he was being framed in the eye of the colonizer – epidermally. He acknowledged that

⁴⁸ Doris Sommer, “Resisting the Heat” in *Culture of United States Imperialism*, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 408.

⁴⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 112.

he could not escape his body. He wrote: "my body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning... the negro is an animal, the negro is bad, the negro is mean, the negro is ugly."⁵⁰ He conveyed a sense of being trapped and imprisoned by a history of representation, which sought to over-determine the black other as savage, threatening, pre-modern and disenfranchised commodity. It also represented a subtle commentary on the ideological and historical relation between the denial of indigenous people's humanity and the expansion of the Atlantic slave trade. Fanon left the reader in no doubt that there was a direct relationship between these representations, the political practices of imperialism and the gross economic exploitation of the enslaved and colonized.

For Fanon, the body of the enslaved and the colonized became a repository where the drama of race and religion was contested. Apart from the history of violence that scarred the black body and inscribed upon it the collective history of brutality, the black body was also historically framed in terms of ritual performances where it tended to be described in terms of savagery, animism and orgies.⁵¹ Earlier I argued that when Fanon encountered the celebration and veneration of the body in diaspora and indigenous religions such as vodou, quimbois, Santeria and later maraboutism, he too struggled to speak about these traditions in terms other than primitivism or savagery. These (mis)representations stood in stark contrast to the supposed purity of Catholic asceticism which essentially amounted to the denial of the body.⁵² Thus such socio-cultural rites and bodily performances, at times also described as black magic, orgies, and animal eroticism, became a significant inventory by which colonists produced certain representations of the black other.

The black body becomes the site upon which was inscribed not only the horrors of slavery and colonialism but also each and every act of resistance thereto.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 113.

⁵¹ Ibid., 126.

⁵² Birgit Meyer, *Conversion to Modernities*, 210-203.

While for much of colonial history the black body has been the object of a devaluing gaze, Fanon turned toward the black body and insisted that blacks experience their bodies differently in the world.⁵³ Fanon would later recover the agency of the black body, especially in the Algerian struggle where it became wholly part of the violent resistance to colonial domination. The body that had “no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man”⁵⁴ emerged as the sacred weapon of anti-colonial resistance. Confronted with the existential crisis on the Paris tram, Fanon, like Césaire, experienced shock, alienation and anger all of which would provide the rudiments for Fanon's redemptive violence. While in Césaire's *Cahier* the black man was represented in pathetic terms as “comical and ugly”, his features were nonetheless described in violent terms:

one could clearly make out how a sedulous and malevolent thumb had molded his brow into a lump,...his nose with two parallel discombobulating tunnels... eyes rolled in gory fatigue... the bones of an old sordid cheek.⁵⁵

Although this black man, through a description of his facial features was depicted in threatening and violent terms we are presented also with the paradoxical image of him as a character of neglect and resignation. He was a person who was defeated and not at all threatening. This was reminiscent of the wider colonial context in which the alienation of the colonized was produced through representation of the black or Arab as threatening, savage and fanatical, representations that are used as justifications for deploying violence in colonial situations.

Fanon argued that the inversion of “savage” and “primitive”, not simply by returning the gaze but through flinging the black self into irrationality, surrendering to a trance in anticipation of the violence in revolt to colonial brutality. However, for Fanon this bodily surrender was not necessarily rooted in

⁵³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 111.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁵ Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to a Native Land*. Trans. Annie Pritchard (Tarsset, Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 1195), 107.

some kind of religious belief but was characterized by a personal and sacred affinity in relation to the national culture. In re-inscribing the bodily violence inflicted upon the colonized to produce narratives of resistance, Fanon was forced to consider the Antillean celebration of the body and the Islamic surrendering of the body to the national struggle as modes of resistance with which to activate the sacred work of personal and social transformation. As such religious practices could become functional insofar as they were able to be deployed in the interest of the national culture.

Fanon's ethics and aesthetics of transformation focused on unmasking the veil of inferiority in the black self and exposing the social mechanisms that have sustained colonial domination, both in the metropolitan centre and the colonial periphery. This is evidenced by the themes explored in the early chapters of *Black Skin, White Masks*. In these chapters Fanon challenged the logic of internalization of those representations of the black self as savage, primitive and inferior as a means to justify repressive colonial practices. David Lloyd argued that "it is not in the first instance the antagonistic recognition of difference which constitutes the discourse of racism but the subordination of difference to the demand for identity."⁵⁶ Thus Fanon wanted his reader to be aware that, for him, transformation was not simply about the 'internalization of inferiority' but a critique of the active regimes of representation, of power, and of denial as it pertains to the black body. Thus although colonial oppression rested on the dismissal, containment and mutilation of the black body it was significantly also shaped by the disruption of cultural and familial practices.

It was precisely through his analysis of the significance of the black body in producing narratives of oppression or of resistance that Fanon exposed the enduring representations that shored up European colonial racism and privilege. Robert Pippin argued that "the identity of those who do not have the power to co-shape their social and legal status can easily produce a sense of inferiority

⁵⁶ David Lloyd, "Race under Representation" *Oxford Literary Review* 13, 1-2 (1991): 62-49.

and 'appropriate' place at the margins of society."⁵⁷ In addition to the importance of the black body, a second element emerged from Fanon's analysis as it related to the natives, at least in the Maghreb. He found that they were organized around familial cults, and thus the struggle for independence and national culture would require new narratives of cohesion that were consistent in both function and meaning. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, Fanon regarded any form of cultural, ethnic or religious traditions as arresting and escapist insofar as he believed that they discouraged, or at least delayed, people's participation in the Algerian revolution. Fanon did not believe that these traditional institutions were sufficiently reformed to participate meaningfully in the anti-colonial struggle.

In *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon dedicated an entire chapter to 'The Algerian Family' about which he remarked: "the customary and highly structured patterns of behavior that were crystallization of traditional ideas suddenly proved ineffective and were abandoned. Tradition, in fact, is not solely a combination of automatic gestures and archaic beliefs."⁵⁸ Although Fanon found himself at odds with the familial maraboutic cults he nonetheless recognized that they represented a site for the production of the sacred in the Algerian imagination. While he recognised that new forms of opposition 'did not totally eliminate traditional patterns of behavior' he insisted on articulating his aesthetic of transformation in terms of the essential 'conversion of the family' and the 'conversion of the father' in the most secular and humanist terms.⁵⁹ Thus the "measured and ritual relations of the pre-war period gave way to totally new relations."⁶⁰ Where previously the family offered space for ritual and social relations, it would be replaced by a vision and myth of the national culture that would drive the struggle for independence. Fanon concluded the chapter by

⁵⁷ Robert Pippin, "Recognition and Reconciliation in Hegel's Phenomenology: Succeeding as an Agent." Recognition and Power: A Symposium, Utrecht University, Dept. Of Philosophy. 13-15 March 2003, <http://www.phil.uu.nl/recognition/> (accessed February 18, 2009)

⁵⁸ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 100.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 101-104.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

arguing that:

In stirring up these men and women, colonialism has regrouped them under a single sign. Equally victims of the same tyranny, simultaneously identifying a single enemy, this dispersed people is realizing its unity and founding in suffering a spiritual community which constitutes the most solid bastion of the Algerian Revolution.⁶¹

Thus he produced a conception of national culture that effectively sought to transform familial cults, bracket off religion and produce new narratives of the sacred. Fanon sought to recover inventories of cohesion – to hold together the nation through a revised / new negritude, thrusting the over-determined body into violent combat, and through privileging the prophetic peasant class. While he argues that all hope rests with this newly constituted 'spiritual community' which is made up of the urban and rural poor, Fanon was nonetheless haunted also by the concern raised by Leiris and the *College de sociologie* about the limits of collective action especially when coupled with violence. While he was not in full agreement with Durkheim's theories about the origin of the sacred in effervescence, Fanon offered a cautious privileging of ideas of the suffering collective, previously advanced by negritude and possibly inhabiting the colonial peasantry.

Fanon now, resigned to the fact that appealing to European sensibility and rationalism was impossible, considered the merits of nativism as a viable response to European racism. Even though Fanon was critical of negritude's nativism, scholars have suggested that in "the lived experience of the black" he embarked on an ironic reconsideration of the movement. In response to the white gaze on the blackness of his body, Fanon wrote of being thrown back on nativism and he was able to convey his sense of resignation, as he reluctantly acknowledged the collective memory of enslavement and colonial oppression. Thus negritude was understood as an eschatological movement with limited application to the black struggle for equality. Although limited, negritude

⁶¹ Ibid., 120.

nonetheless offered a vision of an alternative future and functioned as a movement that cohered the black collective. This vision, while rooted in the past, produced narratives of a future couched in an aura of factuality.⁶²

He asserted his conviction that negritude brought to the fore the fact that indigenous cultures have had a long-established cosmological, judicial and sacred systems of meaning. Harre argued that "belief is a mental state, grounded in disposition, but it is confined to people who have certain social institutions and practices."⁶³ Thus, in remarking on the eschatological character of negritude Fanon wrote that he felt that, in the absence of reason "a magical negro culture was hailing me".⁶⁴ He sought to illustrate that indigenous systems of meaning and practice, which he describes as a "magico-social structure"⁶⁵ reflecting what Levy-Bruhl proposed to be a collapse of the duality between man and nature as most visibly present in rituals of "black magic, orgies and initiation".

Fanon argued that it was precisely this difference, the unreason and irrationality, that made possible its use as "an unfamiliar weapon".⁶⁶ He asserted that he "put the white man back into his place"⁶⁷ and his 'shouting his laughter to the stars' marked the beginning of Fanon's refusal of the gaze. While Fanon acknowledged the value of the "magico-sacred" as a potential weapon, one can nonetheless detect his discomfort with the effervescent and the visceral in the following remarks: "I am constructed from the irrational, I wade in the irrational, up to my neck in the irrational."⁶⁸ However he went on to write that: "The white man was wrong, I was not a primitive, not even a half man, I belong

⁶² Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, Michael Banton (New York: Praeger, 1966), 4.; see also Asad's critique of Geertz in Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 49.

⁶³ Rom Harre, "Psychological Variety" in *Indigenous Psychologies*, eds. Paul Heelas and Andrew Lock (London: Academic Press, 1981), 82.

⁶⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 123.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

to a race that had already been working in gold and silver for two thousand years."⁶⁹

It is therefore not at all surprising that Fanon would adamantly assert his opposition to the possibility of being referred to as a "primitive". It was as if he entertained a conception of the "primitive" as essentially irrational as evidenced by his remarks about indigenous religious practices as black magic, orgies and initiations.⁷⁰ Although he acknowledges that Africans were accomplished in the crafts of working with silver or gold, he dismissed any possibility that these technological accomplishments might be related to ritual practice, instead of simply seeing them in terms of trade and modernizing. Thus in the conception of the "primitive" in terms of magic, orgy and initiation, the black body was generally framed in ritual celebration and childlike surrender.

Fanon appeared to have had an appreciation that the study of native cultures produced sets of knowledge about belief, social relations and economy that were used to sanction the colonial enterprise. He wrote that "face to face with these rites, I am doubly alert... What is one to think of all these manifestations, all these initiations, all these acts."⁷¹ Speaking more generally of the Algerian context that Fanon would later work in, Rachid Tlemcan made the following observation in his *State and Revolution in Algeria*:

Typically, traditional colonial discourses and Orientalism regarded the "ignoble Arab" as a living in a state of despotism in opposition to the "noble savage" living in a state of tribal democracy. According to E. Gauthier, one of the most distinguished orientalist in the 19th century, an inherent conflict exists between the Berbers and the Arabs. Maghribi history, according to him, is permanently dominated by a permanent confrontation between two biological parts fundamentally opposed in their eternal behavior... the Maghrib has always been cut into two irreconcilable halves...⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid., 130.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 126.

⁷¹ Ibid., 126.

⁷² Rachid Tlemcani, *State and Revolution in Algeria* (London: Zed Books, 1986), 198.

So here in 1940s Paris Fanon became deeply and personally aware of the flawed and corrupt nature of continental knowledge production and so he used the opportunity to speak back to the European who, fuelled with a different kind of irrational thinking, constructed a black other that terrorized the European imagination. Through his wailing we are made aware of the limitation (and implied futility) of the nativist enterprise and finally Fanon expressed his frustration that even the (anti-colonial) nativist relied on this over-determined racial construction of the other. He clearly sought to put distance between his own thinking and this paradigm, defined by Jean Paul Sartre as a racist anti-racism, but despite his anxieties about negritude Fanon nonetheless regarded it as a springboard to action.

Fanon wanted to transcend this limitation of negritude and produce an idea where the black body would break out of its over-determined status to become an active element in the struggle for liberation. The colonised and enslaved body's engagement in liberative and redemptive violence represented negritude's active presence in Fanon's aesthetic of transformation and thus Fanon reconfigured negritude's future in terms of 'national culture'. Janis Pallister, in his treatment of Aimé Césaire saw negritude as "essentially a revolt against oppression of the black race by the white race, fused with a desire to restore human dignity of the black man who had borne four centuries of servitude."⁷³ It was precisely because of these characteristic qualities of negritude, to revolt and restore, that Fanon declared himself to be left with no choice but to assert that violence represented the absolute line of action.⁷⁴ He asserted that "violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."⁷⁵

Already in *Black Skin, White Masks* we saw how Fanon developed the transition

⁷³ Pallister, Janis *Aimé Césaire* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 24.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁷⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 74.

from a passive or invisible slave to a self-determined subject. Frustrated with the flawed thinking and the stubborn representations of the colonized, he concluded that in the end he was:

“deprived of a negro past, deprived of a negro future”⁷⁶

“I am not a potentiality of something, I am wholly what I am”⁷⁷

“the negro suffers in his body differently than the white... in order to break from this infernal, cycle he explodes it”⁷⁸

What became evident was not simply the significance of the assertion of self-recognition or a revolutionary vision of the future, but the emergence of the new transformed man whose body became a sacred instrument in the production of a national culture. Through his re-inscription of the brutalized black body as an instrument of material transformation and social cohesion, Fanon re-iterated his earlier assertion that “the colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence.”⁷⁹ I suggest that this idea of the black body as more than simply the explanatory category, inherited from Merleau-Ponty, but also as active and organic emerged from Fanon’s observations of the significance of the body as a site of memory and transformation in diaspora religions and in maraboutic cults. In contrast to Fanon’s earlier conception of the black body of “primitive religion”, engaged in exotic ritual practice and surrendering to child-like primitivism, in the anti-colonial struggle the black body was represented in terms of violent savagery and self-assertion.

Fanon’s trajectory of the transformation of the new man started with self-recognition, then the refusal of the gaze before engaging in active, violent opposition to the conditions of alienation. The entire aesthetic of transformation was captured by the black bodily action, activating redemptive violence in the conditions of the colony. In this state the revolutionary became captivated by

⁷⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 138.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁷⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 68.

the utopian vision of national culture, it assumed a sacred meaning, a sentiment described by Geertz in his discussion of religious symbols as moods and motivations being made meaningful.⁸⁰ To show how such motivations assumed sacred meaning in the anti-colonial struggle, Fanon spoke of the young men who, as fadai (martyrs) readily committed their bodies for the revolution⁸¹ and to illustrate the active resistance of Algerian (Muslim) activists, he wrote that:

the fadai does not need to be unaware of danger, to be fogged by his consciousness or forget. The terrorist, from the moment he undertakes an assignment, allows death to enter his soul. He has a rendezvous with death. The fadai, on the other hand, has a rendezvous with the life of the Revolution, and with his own life. The fadai is not one of the sacrificed. To be sure, he does not shrink before the possibility of losing his life or the independence of his country, but at no moment does he choose death.⁸²

Fanon turned the representation of the impenetrable Arab or savage back on the colonial discourse not by disproving the validity of racist colonial claims but through transforming its meaning for the colonized person. It reflected the culmination of Fanon's aesthetic of transformation, of both the individual and the collective. Lewis Gordon suggested that in addressing the psychic integration of the colonized, *Black Skin White Masks* introduced the theme of the political as therapeutic, which would become the hallmark for the transformation of the colonized community, or postcolonial nation that Fanon developed in *Wretched of the Earth*.

In his vision of the creation of the new man, casting off the old negritude, Fanon asserted that identities were not pre-given but that they were shaped by the conditions and relations of the colonial context. In *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* Fanon juxtaposed negritude with white racism when he asserted that "it is the white man who creates the Negro. But it is the Negro who creates Negritude."⁸³

⁸⁰ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 97.

⁸¹ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 111-112.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 57-58.

⁸³ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 47.

In this context negritude is expanded, it assumed a new meaning to become an enterprise that was concerned with more than mere nativist recovery of a glorious past. Although Fanon's vision transcended the nativist celebration of the ancestors, he recognized that conversion to national revolution "did not totally eliminate traditional patterns of behavior."⁸⁴ Having said that, Geertz argued that "of course, all cultural performances are not religious performances, and the line between those that are, and artistic, or even political, ones is not so easy to draw in practice, for, like social forms, symbolic forms can serve multiple purposes."⁸⁵ Fanon's perspective on the colonial relations rested on the notion that the native-settler relations were intrinsically unequal, and thus not borne nor maintained by a process of mutual recognition. Maerhofer highlighted Fanon's radical take on the master-slave dialectic by pointing to Frederic Jameson's notion of transformation through opposites. Jameson argued that in this context transformation did not emerge out of "a process of negation, but rather it is meant to draw out a dialectic of subversion."⁸⁶ Fanon resisted and sought to undermine the colonially imposed and enforced black identities, through a radical inversion of representation that framed the colonized as lazy, deceitful, violent, irrational and over-sexed.

Fanon's position on the relationship between religion and modernity was always paradoxical. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, while he sought to argue for the exclusion of religion from the anti-colonial enterprise, not only was he confronted by the persistence of indigenous traditions or "primitive religions" but also in the production of a national culture, he was forced to produce a narrative of the sacred to capture the imagination of the irredeemably religious natives. Fanon argued that the transformation of the self would only come about as a result of the recovery of the divided, inferiorized black self – violated by colonialism – and he insisted that only through self-recognition and resistance would the natives assume their full humanness. However, just as civilization and

⁸⁴ Ibid., 104.

⁸⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 113.

⁸⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 309.; cited in Maerhofer, "Aimé Césaire and the Crisis of Aesthetic and Political Vanguardism," 6.

language were regarded as a prerequisite for Christianization, for Fanon rationalism through the 'bracketing off' of ("primitive") religion was a prerequisite for black self-recognition and recovery. Of course, the humanistic impulse of Fanon's aesthetic of transformation made it vulnerable due to the possibility that the colonized might grow to resent the fact that in changing their 'outward' material conditions, they would neglect or exclude the inward (piety), inner world of the black. Thus Fanon's recovery of the psychic was made possible at the expense of the expulsion of the mystical.⁸⁷

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon raised not only the possibility of native self-fashioning but asserted that it was necessary for the recovery of one's full humanity. He did this by exposing the extent of native assimilation into the colonial enterprise, then offered an interpretive framework for the recovery of the black self, and then finally proposed a fighting phase. Though there was no immediate sequel to *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon illustrated in *A Dying Colonialism* the transformative effect of the anti-colonial struggle on the culture of the colonized, and in *Wretched of the Earth* in particular he gave an indication of how that aesthetic of transformation might be harnessed to produce an intellectual and spiritual cohesion in the anti-colonial struggle and the postcolonial nation.

Individual and social transformation in Fanon's thinking was intimately connected to his idea of violence as therapeutic. Embedding the transformed in the production of a national culture was a necessary ingredient for activating a collective revolutionary consciousness, in much the same way he understood Césaire's poetics of violence as prophetic.⁸⁸ At the beginning of his last chapter to *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon revealed something of a Marxian perspective on the challenges faced by the black person. He opened the chapter with a quote from Marx which reads:

⁸⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 125.

⁸⁸ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 68.

The social revolution... cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped itself of all its superstitions concerning the past. Earlier revolutions relied on the memories out of world history in order to drug themselves against their own content. In order to find their own content, the revolutions of the nineteenth century have to let the dead bury the dead. Before, the expression exceeded the content; now, the content exceeds the expression.⁸⁹

In addition to seeing anti-colonial violence as a redemptive and cohering force, Fanon relied on the native intellectual for the transformation of the nation. In *The Wretched of the Earth* he wrote that "it is true that the attitude of the native intellectual sometimes takes on the aspect of a cult or a religion."⁹⁰ Through the influences of Marx, Freud and Sartre he came to view religious traditions and superstitions as delaying the success of the anti-colonial revolution. In the Algerian context Fanon proposed that the familial maraboutic traditions be replaced by the idea of national culture as the primary site of social cohesion. He argued that when native intellectuals produced new myths, rituals and symbols, the indigenous masses would become engaged both imaginatively and politically towards launching the anti-colonial revolution.

Benedict Anderson offered a useful distinction between nationalism and racism when he argued that "nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside of time."⁹¹ This distinction allows for an understanding of Fanon's notion of national culture where the native intellectual produced a narrative of the sacred – also viewed as a narrative of contagion – which were coupled with but distinct from modernity's concern with historical destinies. As such what emerged in Fanon's aesthetic of transformation was an idea of national culture that reflected Ernest Renan's blend of the sacred, the primordial and the collective memory. Renan,

⁸⁹ Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire" cited by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, 223.

⁹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 175.

⁹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 136.

a French philosopher and Catholic scholar wrote in his famous 1882 essay, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (What is a nation?):

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. Man, Gentlemen, does not improvise. The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice and devotion. Of all the cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us who we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea.

...More valuable by far than common customs posts and frontiers conforming to strategic ideas is the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and having in the future, a shared programme to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed and hoped together. These are the kind of things that can be understood in spite of differences of race and language. I spoke just now of "having suffered together" and, indeed, suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, they impose duties, and require a common effort.⁹²

NATIONAL CULTURE AS SACRED WORK

In his article, "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition", Homi Bhabha suggested that *Black Skin, White Masks* and *Wretched of the Earth* can be articulated as respectively concerned with, the politics of narcissism and the politics of nationalism.⁹³ In refining his earlier reflections on the transformation of the "new man" in relation to the development of a national culture in *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon argued that a total revision of worldview is required when he wrote:

⁹² Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" in Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, London: Routledge, 1990, p.19

⁹³ Homi Bhabha, "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition," in *Remaking History*, eds. B Kruger and P Mariani (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989), 146.

For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man.⁹⁴

Fanon understood the “new man” as representing the transformation of the ways in which people positioned themselves in relation to the “Other”. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon clarified the conception of the “new man” when he noted that:

man is not merely a possibility of recapture or of negation... Man is a yes that vibrates cosmic harmonies.⁹⁵

As such the “new man” thesis was not simply concerned with the liberation of a singular community or individual but with the complete transformation of social relations globally. He reflected the enduring influence of his mentor when he wrote that “political education means opening their minds, awakening them, and allowing the birth of their intelligence; as Césaire said, ‘it is to invent souls’.”⁹⁶ Fanon’s texts appeared to also engage and resolve the anxieties about religion that were produced by his attempts to articulate his detailed investigation of recovery of individual and collective psyches among the colonised. Sekyi-Otu argued that for Fanon “the theatre of collective individuation is an indeterminate essence and destiny of the race, or an ancestral way of being kept inviolate in the body and souls of a resilient peasantry; it is the national community.”⁹⁷ Whilst it was impossible to entirely separate *Black Skin, White Masks* from *Wretched of the Earth*, when they were brought into conversation around his conception of transformation in “Concerning Violence” and “On National Culture”⁹⁸ we saw Fanon’s conceptions of the intimate relation between the therapeutic recovery of the individual and that of social collectivities. Fanon wrote that:

⁹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 255.

⁹⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 10.

⁹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 159.

⁹⁷ Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon’s Dialectic of Experience*, 182.

⁹⁸ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 166–199.

Culture is first the expression of a nation, the expression of its preferences, of its taboos and of its patterns. It is at every stage of the whole society that other taboos, values and patterns are formed. A national culture is the sum total of all these appraisals; it is the result of internal and external tensions exerted over society as whole and also at every level of that society. In the colonial situation, culture, which is doubly deprived of the support of the nation, falls away and dies. The condition for its existence is therefore national liberation and the renaissance of the state.⁹⁹

Fanon held a dynamic view of culture, as a *vital* principle that represented the creative potential of the national community. Michele Richman sought to highlight the Durkheimian character of this conception of the collective – as a ubiquitous force to generate collective ideals and action.¹⁰⁰ She argued that for Durkheim “society substitutes for the world revealed to us by our senses a different world that is the projection of the ideals created by society itself.”¹⁰¹ First's speech given to *Presence Africaine's* Rome Conference during the Easter of 1959, “On National Culture” was expanded for inclusion in *Wretched of the Earth* thus locating it firmly within the broader narratives of postcolonial visions and parochial identities. With its urgent tone, this essay explicitly announced Fanon's reflections on the question of national culture and its place in the struggle for liberation. What set this text apart was its inscription of the problematics of culture as it related to the question of transforming the colonized as a social collectivity. Eric San Juan argued that “On National Culture” represented an attempt by Fanon to “reconfigure the value and function of tradition and all the properties of indigenous life forms in a Manichean environment”.¹⁰²

It is in this essay that Fanon's production and transformation of national culture

⁹⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 196-197.

¹⁰⁰ Michele Richman, 'The Scared Group' in *Bataille: Writing the Sacred*, ed. Carolyn Bailey Gill (London: Routledge, 1995), 62-63.

¹⁰¹ Emile Durkheim, *Sociology and Philosophy*, trans. D.F. Pocock (New York: The Free Press, Macmillan, 1974), 94-95.

¹⁰² Eric San Juan, “An Intervention into Cultural Studies”, in *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Anthony Alessandrini (London: Routledge, 1999), 132.

was refined, and one can detect the extent to which Fanon's thoughts replicated the "West's civilising mission" insofar as his passion for a "new world" or "new man" led him to set aside parochial interests.¹⁰³ For Fanon it was only in the "armed struggle" that the native could find integration from the alienation of the self brought about by colonialism. Although there may be some recognition of the diversity of issues that needed to be addressed, it was the political reality that was seen to be the "truths of the nation"¹⁰⁴ of the nation. Fanon went on to argue that the artist, performer and the poet had to give voice to the people's revolution, to manufacture a new national culture. He asserted that "[it] is not enough to try and free oneself by repeating proclamations and denials".¹⁰⁵ While the psychic transformation of the nation was activated by the armed struggle, it was through the interventions of the national intellectuals that political ideals were made real.

Fanon believed that both the discourses on indigenous tradition, one configured by colonial and the other sustained by indigenous appeals to a glorious past, threatened to undermine the struggle for liberation. He argued that through the interventions of native intellectuals and the re-inscription of the colonized body, a reinvented national culture would become the organising principle around which interests in the struggle for liberation would be cohered. He suggested that, "when a people undertake an armed struggle, or even a political struggle against a relentless colonialism, the significance of tradition changes".¹⁰⁶ For Fanon, this proposed revision of national culture, articulated by native intellectuals and legitimated by the masses, offered the only possible relationship between indigenous culture and the nationalist struggle against alienation. Fanon reinvented markers of difference as ways of manufacturing a collective character that inhabits the nationalist project without conceding to conservative demands for indigenism. Instead of framing his aesthetic of transformation (and consequently, liberation) in terms of religion, tradition or race, he produced

¹⁰³ Eric San Juan, "An Intervention into Cultural Studies," 132.

¹⁰⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 181.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 180

themes of collectivity that were concerned with the ideas of the “primitive”, the “savage” and ultimately, the reframing of the black body.

The transformation of the nation, like the individual, assumes a mythic and religious character, insofar as it, by a Durkheimian definition, saw the mundane assume a kind of significance well beyond its normal meaning. It was understood as those resources and elements of human aspiration that, in an immediate fashion, motivated and focused the attention of the colonized on imagined landscapes that transcended material conditions – thus producing sacred resources. Fanon regarded it as an integral part of those forces that bring about national liberation and integration.

Finally, for Fanon, poets and artists and performers, like the poet-politician in Césaire's *Cahier* come to function as the ritual specialists of national culture because they produce words, images and performances - *texts, icons, and rituals* - through which collective memories are articulated and an imagined future is projected.¹⁰⁷ In this manner they would rewrite the “thousand details, anecdotes and stories” that historically framed the black person. For Fanon these ritual specialists were able to transcend negritude's pursuit of the past as well as “the corporeal curse” to produce a narrative of the sacred that did not rely on ‘the great revealed religions’ nor on black magic and superstitions. Fanon's analysis of, and struggle against, the politics of misrecognition served as a sacred resource by virtue of its potential to organise individual subjectivities - and so I hope, in part, to have exposed the residue of the sacred contained in Fanon's ethic and aesthetic of transformation as it pertains to the individual and the collective.

This conception of the struggle for freedom as a sacred (not civilizing) mission demonstrated continuity between the psychic, symbolic and material reality insofar as it offered a critique of the socio-political conditions in the colonies and

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 193-197.

produced a vision of a utopian future. Such an idea of the nation allows for the possibility that we might consider Fanon's aesthetic of transformation as religious or sacred work - without reducing the sacred to emotional and material forces, and thus avoiding the temptation to equate religion with its institutions of ritual practice or faith in general. Thus, what I have argued is that through privileging the black body in his analysis, and by calling the native intellectual to a prophetic task, Fanon was able to transform the meaning of representations of the black subject such as "primitive," "irrational," "pre-modern" and "savage" to produce new categories of meaning. These categories of meaning would then not only produce long-lasting moods and motivations, or clothe the colonized's conceptions in an aura of factuality but would make possible the transformation of the way the black body was seen in the world, and transform the world within which the black would look upon his own body.

Fanon's anxieties about religion suggest that the binaries between the transformation of the individual and the collective will continue to be a dominant force in a postcolonial context, where subject interest will constantly seek to assert itself in new and unexpected ways. The relations of power and formations of resistance require a critique of indigenous inventories of description and performance in the post-colony, where expressions of the collective imagination persist and strategies to domesticate the sacred are constantly reproduced. Whilst not articulated as religion, Fanon's aesthetic of transformation reflected a sacred character, demonstrating that some residue of the mythical is produced in the collective imagination that compels colonized and formerly colonized subjects to act so as to alter and improve their material conditions.

CONCLUSION

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. argued that any enterprise concerned with rehistoricising Fanon can “no longer allow Fanon to remain a kind of icon, or ‘screen memory’, rehearsing dimly remembered dreams of decolonization.”¹

I use this as an opening remark to my conclusion because in this study, that interrogates Fanon's engagement with religion, I have responded to Gates' challenge to move beyond discussion of Fanon as an icon of struggle, violence, or identitarian politics. This study's focus on religion opens up new ways of re-thinking Fanon. Through his engagement with religion, Fanon highlighted its potential to undermine the anti-colonial struggle, but at the same time this interaction with religion made him realize the necessity for narratives of the sacred in his aesthetic of transformation.

Frantz Fanon has captivated the imagination of academics, activists and revolutionaries alike, each refashioning him to fit their own interest or cause. However, too often debates about Fanon have been driven by cultural theorists or political activists and it is not until recently that we have seen critical contributions on Fanon move beyond the idea of him as activist or cultural theorist that was popularized during the decades after his death. Building on recent critical revisions of Fanon, this study set out to address his engagements with religion and consider how these influenced his life, work and philosophies.

Debates in the field of Fanon studies have as much to do with the current academic concerns in the fields of cultural studies and postcolonial theory, as they have to do with understanding Fanon's theories of revolutionary struggles. Historically these debates have been framed by either cultural theorists or political activists, but Bhabha suggests that considering Fanon's warnings about the place

¹ Henry Louis Gates Jr. 'Critical Fanonism' in Nigel Gibson (ed.), *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 266.

of religion and tradition in the postcolony these interests need to be brought into conversation. This tension between the contemporary relevance and the historical representation of a body of work is reflected in his introduction to *The Wretched of the Earth* when he wrote:

As we catch the religiosity in Fanon's language of revolutionary wrath – “the last shall be first,” “the almighty body of violence rearing up...” and run it together with his description of the widening circle of national unity as reaching the “boiling point” in a way that “is reminiscent of a religious brotherhood, a Church or a mystical doctrine,” we find ourselves both forewarned and wary of the ethnonationalist religious conflicts of our times.²

Bhabha suggests that these supposedly competing interests of the cultural theorist and political activists are not mutually exclusive, and in fact greater attention needs to be given to the relation between ethnicity, religion and contemporary political struggles.

As I have suggested in the introduction, the revisions of recovered voices have marked an exciting turning point in postcolonial studies which promises to produce more realistic and comprehensive historiographies. The body of material on Frantz Fanon is immense, but little has been written on religion in the contexts of his life and his work. This points to an underdeveloped area of Fanon studies which I have made the focus of this work. I approached religion as not simply a system of belief in the social life of a community, but through understanding Fanon's engagements with religion identified that he produced narratives of the sacred that draw on the spiritual and intellectual resources of various faith communities whilst 'bracketing out' their volatile and unruly elements. It is my view that such a critique might offer clues for explaining the failure of the postcolonial state to fully resolve the issue of religion in the public and political life of the nation.

² Homi Bhabha, 'Foreword: Framing Fanon' in Richard Wilcox translation of Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (2004 edition), ix.

I have argued that Fanon grew up, was educated, and as a young professional worked in societies defined not only by their pursuit of modernity and equality in the face of racism, but also significantly by what they regarded as “primitive” and threatening. In Martinique, Fanon was taught to privilege French language and custom, and to expel the creole language, religion and cultural practice. It is evident from *Black Skin, White Masks* that Fanon wholly adopted the French colonial ideas of the native as savage, and their traditions as “primitive,” equating their religion as the practices of witches’ black Sabbath. I found that too often Fanon’s interaction with the idea of Africa or with Africans has been framed solely in terms of race. While he believed in the collective consciousness of the enslaved or alienated black, he found their religious practices curious and terrifying.

Reflecting the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, French assimilationism in the Antilles was characterized by the practice of simultaneously recognizing creole or diasporic traditions as the indigenous “other” and yet vilifying them as savage and pre-modern. In this study I have sought to separate these issues so as to expose the fact that Fanon’s ambivalence towards religion emerged not only out of a considered humanism, but that it was the result of a protracted domestic and social education dedicated to the expulsion of the creole or any hint of an African heritage.

Having found refuge in the postwar intellectual communities in metropolitan France, Fanon would in Algeria once again find himself confronted by the effervescent and visceral expressions of religious and cultural tradition. After an initially dismissive attitude towards both traditional Islam as well as more esoteric expressions thereof, Fanon, while remaining deeply suspicious of Islam’s volatile nature, would grow to recognize the meaning and value of the sacred in the life of the communities he worked with.

Fanon's commitments and passions were dedicated to the recovery of the alienated black self, and the inauguration of a postcolonial national culture, within which a free and self-determining black person could pursue their full humanity. Fanon faced several obstacles in pursuing this task, and not all were the result of colonial brutality.

In seeking to advance a secular modernism Fanon found himself locking horns with advocates of nativism, negritude and religious nationalism from within the anti-colonial camp. Fanon, having initially been seduced by the promise of negritude, would grow uneasy with negritude's use of the irrational as an assertion of difference and legitimacy. Fanon mourned negritude's lack of commitment to rationalism and modernity when he asserted that he was surrounded by an indulgence in the irrational - he wailed in the irrational - it overwhelmed him and ultimately added to his alienation. Fanon was deeply aware of these paradoxical constructions of the black other and, to a great extent, much of his life was spent trying to combat and resolve representations of the colonized as "savage" and "primitive". Homi Bhabha argued that the colonized subject was seen as:

both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive and simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces.³

Fanon argued that the inauguration of the new man and the new national culture started with the battle for recognition. But with the colonialists' refusal to offer the native recognition, Fanon used the ambivalence inherent in the Hegelian master-slave dialectic as the starting point of resistance. Fanon's coupling of the politics of recognition with the black body as site of struggle was critical to the development of his aesthetic of transformation. He asserted that the black experiences his body differently in the world and, in the battle over the corporeal, the black body finds

³ Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 82.

that its rhythms and value are determined from without and that the collective history of racism is inscribed and re-inscribed on the black body. The significance of the black body is reinforced by every lashing, every bruise, every task, by every sale of a slave and by every death.

Fanon is adamant that the black person should break out and confront the colonialist. He is not interested in gaining recognition, or better conditions of labour, nor does he any longer want to be like the white man. He wants to be more than a potentiality of something – he wants to be a full human being. Throughout Fanon's texts we are struck by the centrality of the black body, whether in "primitive" ritual, or in the comical and ugly that shore up colonialist representations, or in the veiled Arab woman. Fanon argued that full humanity cannot be achieved by some nostalgic pursuit of an idealized past but through a violent revolt to change the conditions of the present.

The context within which Fanon announced the necessity for revolution was characterized by religion and had been saturated by it. For a long time, and because of his anxiety over the volatile character of religion, Fanon sought to bracket it out. His concerns about religious and sectarian interests were widely known, and he believed that religion would undermine postcolonial solidarity. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon acknowledges the limitations of atheistic ideologies as a mechanism for understanding the Algerian situation he reportedly encouraged Ali Shari'ati, a leader of the Iranian revolution, to exploit the social and intellectual resources of Islam for the emancipation of the masses and the creation of a new and egalitarian society. "Breathe this spirit," he told Shari'ati in a letter from El-Moujahid's office in Tunis, "into the body of the Muslim Orient."⁴ Fanon came to the realization that religion represented an important element in Algerian life:

The society had for a long time been structured and compartmentalized, almost branded into three major components:

⁴ Sarah Shari'ati, 'Le Fanon connu de nous,' Ghorba, 14 December 2004

Europeans, Jews and natives, which is to say, Christians, Jews and Muslims. These religious markers were the best expressions of the inner boundaries, impalpable at times, the present albeit invisible walls of glass around which society was organized.⁵

Notwithstanding his view that religion anaesthetized the peasant masses against their material conditions, in order to forge a new national culture of unity he cautioned anti-colonial nationalists not to disregard traditional authorities, and wrote:

traditional chiefs are ignored, sometimes taken down a peg. Instead of integrating the history of the villages and the conflicts between the tribes and the clans into the people's struggle, the history of the future nation has a singular disregard for minor local histories and tramples the only thing relevant for the nation's actuality.⁶

Yet, while he sought to safeguard indigenous social institutions such as the chiefs, he was quite clear about the disruptive effect of religious practices. In his essay "Colonialism and Medicine," Fanon was confident that "Witchcraft, *maraboutism* (already discredited as a result of the propaganda carried on by the intellectuals), the belief in the *djinn*, all these things seemed to be part of the very being of the Algerian" and would be swept away.⁷ He viewed these supposed cults of local saints, whether dead or alive, as traditions where "popular forms of Islam fuse with pre-Islamic animism, with ritual dances being used to induce a trance-like state that could produce a cathartic effect."⁸

Fanon famously declared Catholicism and later Islam as the 'great revealed religions' and yet he persistently dismissed indigenous religions as "primitive," emotional and regimes of family that relied on the old ways. Where in the

⁵ Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, trans. Nadia Benabid (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 40.

⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Penguin, 1967), 90.

⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakom Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 143.

⁸ David Macey, *Fanon: A Life* (London: Granta, 2000), 236.

Martinique of his childhood the expressions of the primitive, encapsulated by creole, threatened to undermine his fragile French identity, in Algeria the indigenous, as expressed by the maraboutic cults, was seen as ultimately disruptive to the revolution against colonialism. Fanon argued that religion has historically not only been complicit in the production of derogatory representations of native peoples, whether organised around colonial Catholicism or against Islam and indigenous traditions, but also he argued that it blinded people from their material conditions.

Fanon thus sought to produce a programme of social transformation that captured the anti-colonial sentiment of the Algerian nation, gave expression to the sacred pursuit of full humanity, whilst seeking to keep the disruptive effect of religion at bay. I have argued that Fanon did this through the development of an aesthetic of transformation that relied as much on the socio-diagnostic/ therapeutic models as it did on the idea of the sacred. I argued that through a broad reading of Fanon, as therapist, we begin to see how he employed the idea of transformation as sacred through highlighting its function as stubborn, volatile, infectious and vital.

Fanon's idea of the postcolonial national culture reflected a utopian vision of a social and moral space that the 'new man' would be able to exist in, but this 'new man' would only acquire recognition or redemption through surrendering his body to the pursuit of liberation. Through this surrender of the formerly enslaved body to the violent struggle for liberation, the body acquires a new and sacred meaning. Thus the sacred becomes activated by the material pursuit of transformation and the national culture emerges. Mona Ozouf argued that "a society instituting itself must sacralise the very deed of instituting."⁹ Fanon saw the necessity of bracketing off religion, or religious practices, from the struggle for liberation, and therefore he deployed native intellectuals as guardians of the sacred to produce a new national narrative. These intellectuals were able to take on the "aspects of a cult or a

⁹ Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 276.

religion.”¹⁰ Through their production of new narratives of national cohesion, Fanon believed these native intellectuals would be able to capture the hearts and imagination of the colonized and bring about ‘the sacred unity of the struggle for liberation.’¹¹

Fanon argued that once captivated by a vision of a new national culture, the colonized would see violence as the only definitive line of action. To pursue national liberation was to work for the death of the settler - thus the native “finds his freedom in and through violence.”¹² For Fanon it was not sufficient to identify the lack of recognition on the face of the colonizer, to come face to face with the terror of a child on a Parisian tram, or to excavate history in the pursuit of a glorious black past. He asked for the black body to be surrendered to the struggle both as a site and a sacred instrument of redemptive violence. He wrote:

Those lightning flashes of consciousness which fling the body into stormy paths or which throw it into an almost pathological trance where the face of the other beckons me on to giddiness, where my blood calls for the blood of the other, where the sheer inertia of my death calls for the death of the other.¹³

I argued that Fanon’s aesthetic of transformation gave prominence to both the body and national culture as the sites of the production of a narrative of the sacred. This aesthetic emerged, in part, from his often ambivalent engagements with religion. Fanon argued that although the enslaved body was historically brutalized, that in revolt and resistance the coloniser’s brutality becomes inverted and, in pursuit of a national culture, would be turned against the colonizer in an act of redemptive violence. Once he came to recognize that religion, through its celebration or surrender of the body and through its visions of an alternate future, served a meaningful function in the lives of the colonized, Fanon sought to replicate

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 175.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹² *Ibid.*, 67-68.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 111.

and produce similar sentiments of the sacred in his work.

Although he regarded indigenous, “primitive” or diasporic religious traditions as a means of undermining native opposition to colonialism, Fanon recognized the salience of indigenous traditions for the colonized masses. Therefore in his aesthetic of transformation he bracketed off religion to produce a national culture that offers the vision, meaning and cohesion of a utopian postcolonial state. However, in the pursuit of a national culture, the body becomes the main site of contesting and affecting the sacred. For example, the Antillean celebration of the body made possible a connection between the present and a sacred African past. Likewise, the surrender of the Algerian body in acts of anti-colonial violence made possible a vision of a future where the sacred is activated through black self-recognition and not through “primitive religions”, Islam or Catholicism.

I have argued that through his engagements with religion Fanon recognized that while Catholicism at times overtly sanctioned colonialism, he highlighted ways in which negritude and the nativist recovery of indigenous practices served to reinforce particular representations of Africans as “primitive” and pre-modern. Thus he developed a conception of religion as a social force insofar as it produced rituals, symbols and sentiments that served to anchor its believers to their community. While I am sympathetic with the issues raised by Christopher Miller's *Theories of Africans*, I disagree with his view that Fanon's weakness is not in his underestimating the persistence of the religious, but in his contempt for tradition. I believe that Fanon's views on religious and cultural traditions evolved during his years of activism in North Africa. I argued that although he sought to bracket out religion from political discourses, he came to a sincere recognition of the significance of tradition in the lives of the colonized.

Fanon viewed all the faith communities in the colonial context as forces that, in different ways, threatened to undermine the anti-colonial struggle. However, his

recognition of the force and prevalence of religion in the colonial context saw him produce narratives of the sacred to motivate the transformation of the self and society.¹⁴ He sought to reverse what he regarded as the intellectual and spiritual poverty which resulted from colonialism.¹⁵ He was adamant that the colonized should not fall back on orthodox conceptions of religion, which largely sought to explain religion as a system made up of knowledge and beliefs, of arts and morals, tools and technology, language, laws, customs, legends, myths, and other components but to rather frame their lives around narratives of the sacred that address their material and psychic aspirations.

So ambivalent was his engagement with religion that Sekyi-Otu asked whether “in the postcolonial nation's envisaged acts of redescription and self-narration, is there any respect in Fanon's texts for codes and conventions fashioned in response to irreducibly ethnic contexts, hopes and fears. Or does Fanon's program promote, if not a destructive attitude toward ethnic idioms, at least a sort of piracy, an illicit appropriation of ethnic particulars for the national integration of narrative institutions”¹⁶

Fanon saw religious constituencies as useful once reformed. He believed that only once religious beliefs and practices were “bracketed off” that these traditions could possibly emerge as resources that could be used in the advancement of the struggle against colonialism. Although he moved some way towards recognizing the significance of religion in the lives of the colonized, ultimately Fanon could not imagine a postcolonial ‘national culture’ that would not be under threat of religious or ethnic divisions. This ambivalence towards religion underscored by his privileging of the rational, meant that his idea of national culture in the postcolony would always be characterized by the fear of divisions defined by religion and ethnicity. This determination to expel religion from the recovery of the black self and the

¹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 168.

¹⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 147-148.

¹⁶ Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 40.

inauguration of the new nation, in the work of Fanon, ultimately served to reinforce the kind of 'details, anecdotes and stories' that Europeans had produced about its black other.

University of Cape Town

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abu-Loghod. *Remaking Women*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Adam, Hussein. "Fanon as a Democratic Theorist," *African Affairs* 92 (1993): 499-518.
- Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory*, London: Verso, 1992.
- Albada-Jelgersma, Jill. "Capecia, Mayotte" in *Encyclopedia of Latin American and Caribbean Literature: 1900-2003*, eds. Daniel Balderston and Mike Gonzalez. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Aldrich, Charles Roberts. *The Primitive Mind and Modern Civilization*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.
- Anttonen, Veikko. "Sacred" in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, eds. Willi Braun and Russel T. McCuthceon. New York: Cassel, 2000.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. London: Methuen, 1992.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. "Is the Post- in Postmodern the Post-in Postcolonial?" *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Winter 1991): 336-357.
- Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969.
- Arnold, James. *Modernism and Negritude The Poetry and Poetics of Aime Cesaire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reason of Power in Christianity and Islam*. London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Asad, Talal. "Comments on Conversion" in *Conversion to Modernities*, ed. Peter van der Veer. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Asad, Talal. "Religion, State and Nationalism" in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, eds. Peter Van der Veer and Hartmut Lehman. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

- Baker, Jr., Houston. "Reassessing (W)right: A Meditation on the Black (W)hole," in *Modern Critical Views: Richard Wright*, ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
- Baldwin, James. "Princes and Powers" in *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son*, ed. James Baldwin. New York: Dial Press, 1961.
- Baker Jr., Houston. Martinia Dianara and Ruth H Lindeborg, *Black British Cultural Studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Barker, Francis et al., eds. *Colonial Discourse/ Postcolonial Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.
- Balme, Christopher. *Decolonizing the Stage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Barker, Eileen. Ed. *The Centrality of Religion*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2008.
- Barker, Francis. *The Politics of Theory*. London: Colchester, 1983.
- Bastide, Roger. *Social Origins of Religion*, translated by James L. Peacock. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.
- Bataille, George. "Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939" in *Theory and History of Literature, Volume 14*, ed. and translated by Allan Stoekl. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *Force of Circumstance*, translated by R Howard. New York: Paragon House, 1992.
- Beckenridge, Carol A. and Peter van der Veer, eds. *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1993.
- Beckford, James A. *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*. London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1991.
- Berger, Peter. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967.
- Berger, Peter. *The Social Reality of Religion*. London: Faber and Faber, 1969
- Beriss, David. *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Authenticity and Activism in Urban France*. Bolder, CO: Westview Press, 2004.

- Bernard, Robert W. "Joseph Zobel's Autobiographical Novel *Black Shack Alley*: Education as a catalyst against the Politics of Colonial Oppression," *Vitae Scholasticae* (Spring 2004): 63-70.
- Bernasconi, Robert. "The European knows and does not know: Fanon's response to Sartre" in *Frantz Fanon's Black Skin White Masks* ed. Max Silverman. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.
- Bernasconi, Robert. "Eliminating the Cycle of Violence: The Place of A Dying Colonialism in Fanon's Revolutionary Thought," *Philosophia Africana*, Volume 4.2 (August 2001): 17-25.
- Bernasconi, Robert and Sybol Cook. *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.
- Bhabha, Homi. "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition" in *Remaking History*, eds. B Kruger and P Mariani. Seattle: Bay Press, 1989.
- Bhabha, Homi. *Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Bhabha, Homi. "Foreword: Framing Fanon" in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2004.
- Bhabha, Homi. "Remembering Fanon," *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*, ed. Nigel Gibson. Oxford: Polity Press, 2003.
- Bhabha, Homi. "Foreword: Remembering Fanon (Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition)," Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press, 1986.
- Bhabha, Homi. "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Biko, Steve. *I Write what I Like*. London: Heineman, 1979.
- Bloom, Harold. *Modern Critical Views: Richard Wright*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
- Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial*. Oxford: oxford University Press, 1995.
- Bowie, Fiona. *The Anthropology of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.

- Breton, Andre. "Speech to the meeting 'For the Defense of Freedom,'" in *What is Surrealism?*, ed. Franklin Rosemont. New York: Pathfinder Press, 2000.
- Breton, Andre. *Martinique: Snake Charmer*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.
- Britton, Celia. *Race and the Unconscious: Freudianism in French Caribbean Thought*. Research Monographs in French Studies 12. Oxford: Legenda. 2002.
- Brower, Benjamin Claude. 'Review of Frantz Fanon: A Portrait', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, Volume 9:2 (2008)
- Browne, Katherine E. *Creole Economics: Caribbean Cunning under the French Flag*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004.
- Brunschwig, Henri. *La Colonization francaise du pact colonial a la union francaise*. Paris: Calmann-levy, 1949.
- Buckser, Andrew and Stephen D. Glazier. *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.
- Bulhan, Hussein Abdilahi. *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*. New York: Plenum Press, 1985.
- Butler, Judith and Joan Scott, eds. *Feminists Theorize the Political*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Byrne, Peter. "Religion and Religions" in *The Study of Religion, Traditional and New Religion*, eds. Stewart Sutherland and Peter Clarke. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Carrasco, David. "America's America: The Brown Millennium, Three Arches and the Ecumenopolis." *Nanzan Bulletin* 24 (2000): 38-47.
- Carmichael, Stokely with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell. *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)*. New York: Scribner, 2003.
- Casanova, Jose, "Private and Public Religions." *Social Research* 59 (1992): 17-57.
- Case, Frederick Ivor. "Novels of Social and Political Protests to the 1950s" in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: Hispanic and Francophone Regions*, eds. Albert Arnold James, Julio Rodriguez-Luis and Michael J. Dash. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994.
- Caute, David. *Frantz Fanon*. New York: Viking, 1970.

- Caws, Mary Ann. *Surrealist Painters and Poets: An Anthology*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
- Cesaire, Aime. *Discourse on Colonialism*, translated by Joan Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- Cesaire, Aime. "Discourse on Colonialism" (selected excerpts) in *Nations and Identity*, ed. Vincent P Pecora. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001.
- Cesaire, Aime. *Notebook of a Return to a Native Land*, trans. Clayton Eshleman, ed. Annette Smith. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001.
- Casanova, Jose. "Secularization Revisited: A reply to Talal Asad," in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and his Interlocutors*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.
- Chamoiseau, Patrick. *Texaco*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1992.
- Cherki, Alice. *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, translated by Nadia Benabid. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- Clancy-Smith, J. and F. Gouda. *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender and family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998.
- Clifford, James and George Marcus, eds. *Writing Culture*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1986.
- Cobban, Alfred. *A History of Modern France Vol. 1*. London: Penguin Book, 1961.
- Cone, James H. "Black Theology as Liberation Theology" Gayraud S. Wilmore (ed.), *African American Religious Studies*.
- Cook, Mercer. "Review of *Je suis martiniquaise* by Mayotte Capecia" *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol.34, No.3 (July 1949): 370.
- Cooper, F. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, knowledge, History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Cooper, F and Anne Stoler, eds. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Culture in a Bourgeois World*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1997.

- Cottenet-Hage, Madeleine and Kevin Meehan. "'Our Ancestors the Gauls...': Schools and Schooling in Two Caribbean Novels," *Callaloo*, Vol. 15, No. 1, The Literature of Guadeloupe and Martinique. (Winter, 1992): 75-89.
- Dane, Robyn. "When Mirrors Turns Lamp: Frantz Fanon as Cultural Visionary" *Africa Today* Vol.41:2 (1994): 70-91.
- Daniel, Justin. "The French *Departements d'outre mer*. Martinique and Guadeloupe," in *Extended Statehood in the Caribbean*, eds. Lammert de jong and Dirk Kruijt. Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2005.
- Dash, Michael. *Edouard Glissant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Davis, Gregson. *Aime Cesaire*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Decker, Jeffrey Louis. "Terrorism (Un)Veiled: Frantz Fanon and the Women of Algeria," *Cultural Critique* 17 (1990): 177-198.
- Dirks, Nicholas B., ed. *Colonialism and Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.
- Douglas, Frederick. *My Bondage, My Freedom*. Chicago: Ebony Classics-Johnson Publishing co., 1970.
- Duara, Prasenjit. "Introduction" in *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then*, ed. P. Duara. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Durkheim, Emile. *Sociology and Philosophy*, translated by D.F. Pocock. New York: The Free Press, Macmillan, 1974.
- Durkheim, Emile. *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. 1st edn. 1912, London: Allen and Unwin, 1976.
- Ebrahim, Hassenah. "Sugar Cane Alley: Re-reading Race, Class and Identity in Zobel's *La rue cases negres*." *Literature Film Quarterly* (2002): 146-155.
- Eduards, Maud. "Women's Agency and Collective Action," *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.7, Nos. 2/3 (1994): 181-186.
- Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, translated by William R Trask. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959.

Fabian, Johannes. *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Explorations of Central Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Fairchild, Halford H. "Fanon's Wretched of the Earth in Contemporary Perspective." *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 25: 2 (1994): 191-199.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto Press, 1986.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington. New York: Penguin, 1967.

Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, translated by Haakom Chevalier. New York: Grove Press, 1965

Fanon, Frantz. *Towards the African Revolution*, translated by Haakom Chevalier. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1965.

Fanon, Frantz. "On National Culture," in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.

Fanon, Frantz. "The Negro and Psychopathology" in *Literary Theory*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004.

Farber, Samuel. "Violence and the material Class Interests: Fanon and Gandhi" *Journal of Asian and African Studies* Vol. 16 No.3-4 (1981): 196-211.

Faulkner, Rita A. "Assia Djebar, Frantz Fanon, Women, Veils, and Land," *World Literature Today* 70.4 (1985): 847-855.

Fitzgerald, Timothy, ed. *Religion and the Secular: Historical Colonial Formations*. London: Equinox, 2007.

Fogel, Daniel. *Africa in Struggle: National Liberation and Proletarian Revolution*. Seattle: Ism Press, 1982.

Fontenot, Chester. *Frantz Fanon: Language as God Gone Astray in the Flesh*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979.

Foucault, Michel. *Religion and Culture*. edited and selected by Jeremy Carrette. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.

- Frindethie, Martial K. *Black Renaissance in Francophone African and Caribbean Literatures*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2008.
- Gaines, Kevin Kelly. "Revisiting Richard Wright in Ghana: Black Radicalism and the Dialectics of Diaspora" *Social Text*, 67 Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer 2001): 75-101.
- Garcia Passalacqua, J.M. *Two Caribbean World Views: Fanon and Naipul*. Washington, DC: Wilson Center, 1983.
- Garvey, Amy Jacques. *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*. New York: Routledge, 1967.
- Gates Jr., Henry Louis. "Critical Fanonism" in *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue*. ed. Nigel Gibson. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999.
- Gates Jr., Henry Louis. ed. "Race," *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Gaude, Eddie S. *In a Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the politics of Black America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Religion as a Cultural System" in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton ASA Monographs 3. London: Tavistock, 1973.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Geismar, Peter. *Fanon: The Revolutionary as Prophet*. New York: Dial Press, 1971.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Muslim Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Gendzier, Irene. *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study*. New York: Pantheon Books-Random House, 1973.
- Gerard, Albert S. *European Language Writing in sub-Saharan Africa*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986.
- Gevisser, Mark. *The Dream Deferred: Thabo Mbeki*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2007.
- Gibson, Nigel. *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2003.

- Gibson, Nigel. *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue*. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999.
- Gibson, Nigel. *Frantz Fanon*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1998.
- Gibson, Nigel. "Radical Mutation: Fanon's Untidy Dialectic of History" in *Rethinking Fanon*, ed. Nigel Gibson. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999.
- Gibson, Nigel. "Black Consciousness 1977-1987: The Dialectics of Liberation in South Africa", *Africa Today*, Vol.35, No.1: Black Consciousness In South Africa (1st Quarter, 1988): 1-29.
- Gibson, Nigel. "Thoughts about doing Fanonism in the 1990's" *College Literature* Vol. 26:2 (1999): 96-117.
- Gibson, Nigel. ed. *Fanon and Fanonism*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1999.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Gines, Kathryn. "Fanon and Sartre 50 Years Later" *Sartre Studies International* Volume 9:2 (2003): 55-67.
- Glazier, Stephen D. "Pilgrimages in the Caribbean" in *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Alan Morinis. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992.
- Glissant, Edouard. *Caribbean Discourse*, translated by Michael Dash. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996.
- Gordon, Lewis. *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Gordon, Lewis., Denean Sharley-Whiting and Rene White, *Fanon: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.
- Graves, Benjamin. "Postcolonial Discourse: Theories of Colonialism and Postcolonialism"
<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/fanon/fanon2.html>, n.d.
 (accessed 12 October 2008).
- Haddour, Azzedine. *The Fanon Reader: Frantz Fanon*. London: Pluto Books, 2006.

- Haigh, Sam. *Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing: Guadeloupe and Martinique*. New York: Berg Publishers, 1999.
- Hall, Stuart. "The Afterlife of Frantz Fanon: Why Fanon? Why Now? Why *Black Skin White Masks*?" in *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read. London: ICA, 1996.
- Hall, Stuart. "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," *New Left Review* 209 (1995): 3-14.
- Hamilton, Malcolm. *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Hand, Sean. *Alter Ego: the Critical Writings of Michele Leiris*. Research Monograph in French Studies No.17. Oxford: Legenda, 2007.
- Hand, Sean. *Leiris: Writing the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Hansen, Emmanuel. "Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary," in *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue*, ed. Nigel Gibson. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999.
- Hansen, Emmanuel. *Frantz Fanon: Social and Political Thought*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976.
- Harre, Rom. "Psychological Variety" in *Indigenous Psychologies*, eds. Paul Heelas and Andrew Lock. London: Academic Press, 1981.
- Hart, William. *Edward Said and the Religious Effect of Culture*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Heelas, Paul and Linda Woodhead. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
- Hegel, Georg. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A.V. Miller. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998.
- Hegel, Georg. *Philosophy of History*, translated John Sibree. New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007.
- Helie-Lucas, Marie-Aimee. "Women, nationalism and Religion in the Algeria Struggle for Liberation" in *Rethinking Fanon, The Continuing Dialogue*, ed. Nigel Gibson. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999.

- Henry, Paget. "African and Afro-Caribbean Existentialism," in *Existence in Black*, ed. L.R. Gordon. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Herskowitz, Melville. *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958.
- Honneth, Alex. *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, translated by J. Anderson. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1995.
- Hord, Fred L. and Jonathan Scott Lee. *I Am because We are: Readings in Black Philosophy*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.
- House, Jim. "Colonial Racism in the 'metropole': reading *Peau noir, masques blancs* in context" in *Frantz Fanon's BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS*, ed. Maxim Silvermann. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.
- Hurbon, Laennec. "New Religious Movements in the Caribbean" in *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*, ed. James A. Beckford. London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1991.
- Ingram, Penelope. *The Signifying Body*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.
- Irele, Abiola. *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- Irele, Abiola. 'Literature and Ideology in Martinique', in *Special Studies (16)*, Council for international Studies. Buffalo: SUNY, 1972.
- Irele, Abiola. *Blackness and Modernity*. unpublished manuscript. Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2008
- Jameson, Fredric. *Marxism and Form*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- JanMohamed, Abdul. "Humanism and Minority Literature: Towards a definition of Counter-Hegemonic Discourse". *Boundary 2*.12 (Spring /Fall 1984): 281-99.
- JanMohamed, Abdul. *Manichean Aesthetic: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983.
- Jahoda, Gustav. *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Jinadu, Adele. *Fanon: In Search of the African Revolution*. London: Taylor and Francis, 1986.

Kardiner, Abraham and Ralph Linton. *The individual and His Society: The Psychodynamics of Primitive Social Organization*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1939.

Kardiner, Abraham. et. al. *The Psychological Frontiers of Society*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1945.

Kelly, Michael. *The Cultural and intellectual Rebuilding of France After the Second World War*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Kemedjio, Cilas and R. H. Mitsch, "When the Detour Leads Home: The Urgency of Memory and the Liberation Imperative from Aimé Césaire to Frantz Fanon," *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (autumn 1998):

Khanna, Ranjana. *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Kidd, Dudley. *Savage Childhood*. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906.

King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Kristeva, Julia. *National without Nationalism*, translated by Leon Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Kunin, Seth D. *Religion: The Modern Theories*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Kwok, Pai-lan. *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Lackey, Michael. "Frantz Fanon on the Theology of Colonization" *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* Vol. 3, No. 2 (Fall 2002): 1-29.

LaGuere, John Gaffar. *Enemies of Empire*. St. Augustine: University of the West Indies Press, 1984.

Larner, Christina. *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief*. Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

- Lazarus, Neil. *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Leiris, Michel. 'Martinique, Guadeloupe, Haiti' *Le Temps modernes*, 5/52 (1950).
- Lemery, Henry. *La Revolution a la Martinique*. Paris: Larose, 1936.
- leSueur, James D. *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.
- Lincoln, Bruce. ed. *Religion, Rebellion, Revolution*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1985.
- Lloyd, David. "Race under Representation" *Oxford Literary Review* 13, 1-2 (1991): 62-94.
- Levy-Bruhl, Lucien. *Primitive Mentality*, translated by Peter Riviere. New York: Macmillan, 1923.
- Levy-Bruhl, Lucien. *The Notebooks on Primitive Mentality*, translated by Peter Riviere. Oxford: Blackwell, 1976.
- Lewis, Reina. *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- McCulloch, Jock. *Colonial Psychiatry and "the African Mind."* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Mc Culloch, Jock. *Black Souls, White Artifact: Fanon's Critical Psychology and Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- McGuire, Meredith B. "Towards a Sociology of Spirituality: Individual in Social/ Historical Context" in *The Centrality of Religion*, ed. Eileen Barker. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2008.
- McCutcheon, Russell T. *Critics not Caretakers*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001.
- Macey, David. "Frantz Fanon, or the Difficulty of Being Martinican," *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 58:1 (Autumn 2004): 211-223.
- Macey, David. 'Adieu foulard, Adieu Madras', in *Frantz Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks*, ed. Maxim Silvermann. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005

- Macey, David. "Fanon, Phenomenology and Race" in *Philosophies of Race and Ethnicity*, eds. Peter Osborn and Stella Sandford. London: Continuum, 2002.
- MacFie, Alexander L. *Orientalism*. London: Pearson Education, 2002.
- Maerhofer, John. "Aime Cesaire and the Crisis of Aesthetic and Political Vanguardism." unpublished manuscript, 2006.
- Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*. Durham: Duke University, 2008.
- Malena, Anne. *The Negotiated Self - The Dynamics of Identity in Francophone Caribbean Narrative*. New York: Peter Lang, 1999.
- Marshall, Bill and Christina Johnston, *France and the Americas*. Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2005.
- Maran, Rene. *Le petit roi de chemirie*. Paris, 1942.
- Marley, David. *Historic Cities of the Americas*. Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2005.
- Martin, Guy. "Revisiting Fanon Life, Times and Thoughts," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Dec., 2004): 165-171.
- Maspero, Francois. "Editorial Note" in Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, translated by Haakon Chevalier. New York: Grove Press, 1988.
- Masuzawa, Tomoko. *The Invention of World Religions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Mazrui, Ali. "Language and the Quest for Liberation in Africa: The legacy of Frantz Fanon," *Third World Quarterly* 14.2 (1993): 351-364.
- Mbembe, Achille. "The Banality of Power and the Aesthetic of Vulgarity in the Postcolony". *Public Culture* 4.2 (Spring 1992): 1-30.
- Memmi, Albert. "The Impossible Life of Frantz Fanon," *Massachusetts Review* (Winter 1973): 9-39.
- Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. Howard Greenfeld. New York: Orion Press, 1990.

- Mercer, Kobena. 'Busy in the Ruins of a Wretched Phantasia' in *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*, ed. A.C. Alessandrini. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Métraux, Alfred. *Voodoo in Haiti*. New York: Schrocken, 1972.
- Meyer, Birgit. "Modernity and Enchantment" in *Conversion to Modernities*, ed. Peter van der Veer. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Michau, Michael. "Fanon and the Radical Phenomenology of Responsibility," Department of Philosophy Graduate Colloquium, Purdue University, February, 2003.
- Miles, William. *Elections and Ethnicity in French Martinique*. New York: Praeger Publisher, 1986.
- Miller, Christopher. *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990.
- Milne, Lorna. *Postcolonial Violence, Culture and Identity in Francophone Africa and the Antilles*. Bern: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers. 2007.
- Mintz, Sidney and Richard Price. *The Birth of African American Culture: An Anthropological Approach*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.
- Moaddel, Mansoor. *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism and Fundamentalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Mongia, Padmini. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*, London: Arnold, 1996.
- Moore, Bart Gilbert. *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Politics, Practices*. London: Verso, 1997.
- Mphahlele, Ezekiel. "Langston Hughes – introduction to his poetry", in *Introduction to African Literature*, ed. Ulli Beier. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967.
- Mudimbe, Valentine Y. *The Idea of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994
- Murphy, Joseph. *Santeria: African Spirits in America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988.

- Myers, Jason. "The Spontaneous Ideology in Post-Apartheid South Africa" *Politikon* (1999):
- Nordquist, Joan. "Frantz Fanon: A Bibliography", *Social Theory: A Bibliographic Series*, no.65 (2002).
- Onwuanibe, Richard. *A Critique of Revolutionary Humanism: Frantz Fanon*. St Louis: Warren H Green Inc., 1983.
- Ortner, Sherry. "Specifying Agency: The Comaroffs and Their Critics" *Interventions: International Journal of postcolonial Studies* 3.1 (2001): 76-84.
- Ortner, Sherry. "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1984): 126-166.
- Ozouf, Mona. *Festivals and the French Revolution*, translated by Alan Sheridan. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Pallister, Janis L. *Aime Cesaire*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991.
- Parry, Benita. *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Parry, Benita. "Resistance Theory: theorizing resistance" in *Colonial Discourse/ Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.
- Parry, Benita. "Problems with Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," *Oxford Literary Review* 9 (1987): 27-58.
- Pennell, Richard. *Morocco Since 1830: A History*. London: Hurst, 2001.
- Penney, James. "Passing into the Universal: Fanon, Sartre, and the Colonial Dialectic" *Paragraph* 27:3 (2004): 49-67.
- Perinbam, Marie. *Holy Violence*. Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1982.
- Pye, Michael. "Religion: Shape and Shadow" *Numen* 41 (1994): 51-75.
- Pfaff, Françoise and Maryse Conde. *Conversations with Maryse Conde*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.
- Pinn, Anthony B. "Black Theology, Black Bodies and Pedagogy", in *Crosscurrents*, Vol.20, Issue 1-2 (2000): 196-202.

- Pollock, Griselda and Rozsika Parker. *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement*. London: Pandora Books, 1987.
- Praeger, Michele. *The Imaginary Caribbean and the Caribbean Imaginary*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.
- Pratt, Mary Louis. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Price, Sally. "Michel Leiris, French Anthropology and a Side Trip to the Antilles", *French Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol.22, Issue 1 (2004): 23-35.
- Rahnema, Ali. *An Islamic Utopian: A apolitical Biography of Al I Shari'ati*. London: I.B. Tauris Publisher, 2000.
- Rattansi, Ali. "Postcolonialism and its Discontents", *Economy and Society*, 26.4 (1999): 480-500.
- Renan, Ernest. "What is a Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Revere, Robert. 'Revolutionary ideology in Algeria,' *Polity*, 5(4) (1973): 477-488.
- Richman, Michele. " Leiris's *L'Age d'omme*: Politics and the Sacred in Everyday Ethnography," *Yale French Studies*, No. 81, On Leiris (1992): 91-110.
- Richman, Michele. 'The Scared Group' in *Bataille: Writing the Sacred*, ed. Carolyn Bailey Gill. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Robinson, Cedric. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. London: Zed Books, 1983
- Robinson, Cedric. "The Appropriation of Frantz Fanon," *Race & Class* 35.1 (1993): 79-91.
- Rosemont, Franklin. "introduction," in *The Snake Charmer*, Andre Breton, translated by David W. Seaman. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2008.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.
- Said, Edward. "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors", *Critical Inquiry*, 15.2 (1989): 205-225.

- San Juan, Eric. "An intervention into Cultural Studies" in *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Anthony Alessandrini. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. "Black Orpheus" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Patrick Williams and Linda Chrisman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Anti-Semite and the Jew*, translated by George Becker. New York: Schocken Books, 1995.
- Settler, Federico. "The Persistence of the Sacred in Postcolonial Africa", Masters Dissertation, University of Cape Town, December 2006.
- Senghor, Leopold Sedar. "Speech and Image: An African Tradition of the Surreal" in *Symposium of the Whole: A Range of Discourse Toward An Ethnopoetics*, eds. Jerome Rothenberg and Diane Rothenberg. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Senghor, Leopold. "Negritude and Modernity or Negritude as a Humanism for the Twentieth Century" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Patrick Williams and Linda Chrisman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Senghor, Leopold. *Nationhood and the African Road to Socialism*, translated by Mercer Cook. Paris: Presence Africaine, 1962.
- Senghor, Leopold. *On African Socialism*, translated by Mercer Cook. Paris: Seuil, 1964.
- Senghor, Leopold. *Poems of a Black Orpheus*, translated by William Oxley. London: Menard Press, 1981.
- Shohat, Ella. "Notes on the Postcolonial". *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 99-113.
- Slater, Mariam K. *The Caribbean Family: Legitimacy in Martinique*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977.
- Slisli, Fouzi. "Absence of Islamism in Fanon's Work." *Critical Middle Eastern Studies* Volume 17, Issue 1 (March 2008): 97-108.
- Sharpley-Whiting, Tracy Denean. *Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminisms*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997.

- Sharpley-Whiting, Denean Tracy. "Tropiques: Revue culturelle: The Remedy for the Martinican Cultural Void" in *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy*, eds. Robert Bernasconi and Sybol Cook. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.
- Silvermann, Max. *Frantz Fanon's BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.
- Simpson, George Eaton. *Religious Cults of the Caribbean*. Puerto Rico: University of Puerto Rico, Institute of Caribbean Studies, 1970.
- Sindquist, Eric J. *Strangers in the Land*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Smith, Huston. *The World's Religions*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991.
- Smith, John E. *Quasi-Religions: Humanism, Marxism and Nationalism*. London: Macmillan, 1994.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Smith, William Cantwell. *The meaning and End of Religion*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Sommer, Donna. "Resisting the Heat" in *Culture of United States Imperialism*, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993.
- Spiegel, Andrew. "Struggling With Tradition in South Africa" in *Social Constructions of the Past: Representation and Power*, eds. George C. Bond and Angela Gilliam. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Spivak, Gayatri. "Can The Subaltern Speak" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* C. Nelson and L. Grossberg. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Stoler, Anne. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Stora, Benjamin. 'The "Southern" World of the *Pieds Noirs*: Reference to and Representations of Europeans in Colonial Algeria' in Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen (eds.), *Settler Colonialism in the twentieth Century*. New York, Routledge, 2005.

- Suk, Jeannie. *Postcolonial Paradoxes in French Caribbean Writing: Césaire, Glissant and Condé*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Swindler, Ann. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 273-286.
- Taylor, Patrick. "Frantz Fanon and the Narrative of Liberation," *The Narratives of Liberation: Perspectives on Afro-Caribbean Literature, Popular Culture, and Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Thomas, Nicholas. *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994.
- Tlemcani, Rachid. *State and Revolution in Algeria*. London: Zed, 1986.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, racism and Exoticism in French Thought*, translated by C. Porter. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Tosquelles, Francois. "Frantz Fanon et la psychothérapie institutionnelle" *Sud/ Nord: folies et cultures*, No.14 (2001): 167-174.
- Turner, Lou. "On the Difference between the Hegelian and Fanonian Dialectic of Lordship and Bondage," in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, eds. Lewis Gordon, et al. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.
- Turner, Lou and J. Alan. *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought*. Chicago: News and Letters, 1986.
- Van der Veer, Peter. *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Van der Veer, Peter. *Conversion to Modernities*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Van der Veer, Peter and Hartmut Lehman. *Nations and Religion: Perspectives from Europe and Asia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Verges, Françoise. "Chains of Madness, Chains of Colonialism," *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read. Seattle: Bay Press, 1996.
- Verges, Francois. "The Heritage of Frantz Fanon," *European Legacy* 1.3 (1996): 994-998.

- Verges, Francois. "Creole Skin, Black Mask: Fanon and Disavowal." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (Spring 1997): 578-595.
- Visawanathan, Gauri. "Religious Conversion and the Politics of Dissent" in *Conversion to Modernities*, ed. Peter van der Veer. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Voas, David. "The Continuing Secular Transition" in *The Role of Religion In Modern Societies*, eds. Detlef Pollack. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Frantz Fanon: Reason and Violence*. New York: Institute of African Studies, 1970.
- Weate, Jeremy. "Fanon, Merleau-Ponty and the Difference of Phenomenology" in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.
- Wilder, Gary. "Race, Reason, Impasse: Césaire, Fanon, and the Legacy of Emancipation" *Radical History Review* Issue 90 (Fall 2004): 31-61.
- Wilder, Gary. *The French Imperial Nation State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Williams, Patrick and Laura Chrisman, eds. *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1994.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. ed. *African American Religious Studies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989.
- Woodis, Jack. *New Theories of Revolution*. New York: International Publishers, 1972.
- Wright, Richard. "Tradition and Industrialization", *Presence Africaine: Le 1er Congres International des Ecrivains et Artistes Noirs*. Paris: Sorbonne, 19-22 Septembre 1956.
- Wright, Richard. *Black Power*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1995.
- Wuthnow, Robert. *Rediscovering the Sacred: Perspectives on Religion in Contemporary Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992.
- Yelvington, Kevin A. "The Invention of Africa in the Caribbean" in Kevin A. Yelvington (ed.) *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2006.

Young, Robert. *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Young, Robert. *White Mythologies: Writing Histories and the West*. London: Routledge, 1991.

Zahar, Renate. *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation*, translated by Willfried F Feuser. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.

Zayzafoon, Lamia Ben Youssef. *The Production of the Muslim Woman*. Lexington Books, 2005.

Zobel, Joseph. *Black Shack Alley*. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1980.

University of Cape Town