

Introduction: a black rebel with a cause

We are nothing on earth if we are not, first of all, slaves of a cause, the cause of the people, the cause of justice, the cause of liberty.¹

Frantz was born on 20 July 1925 and brought up in a relatively well-to-do family: his father, Casimir Fanon, held a secured position as a custom official and his mother, Eléonore Félicia Médélice, had a haberdashery which provided supplementary income. His mother was the illegitimate daughter of Pauline Ensfielder, a descendant of Alsatian origin. His grandfather, Fernand Fanon, had a small plot of land that could barely feed the family. Significantly, he was a ‘Negro with a trade’; this qualification distinguished him from other Negroes working at the factory who were at the mercy of their employer.² His paternal great-grandmother, Françoise Vindic, was the daughter of a slave born in Gros-Morne, Martinique. In the registry office, she was registered as a slave with the reference number 1405. *Black Skin, White Masks* records the legacy of slavery and the difficulties which arose from mixed marriage and the fear of miscegenation.

It is difficult to construct a biographical portrait of Frantz Fanon, a very discreet and private man, whose life was cut short at the age of 36. He passed away on 6 December 1961, in Bethesda Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland. Until the 1980s he was legally presumed not dead because he was admitted to the hospital under the pseudonym of Ibrahim Fanon and as a Tunisian National. What is passed down to us through the various biographies are fragments of a life that was

fraught with danger and conflict – physical as well as intellectual. At the age of 14, war interrupted his carefree adolescence and precipitated him into the world of conflict. He spent the best years of his life at war: he enlisted to serve in the Second World War (between 1943 and 1945) and then in the Algerian War (between 1957 and 1961), fighting the causes of others, struggling to safeguard notions of freedom and equality as well as the indivisibility of the natural rights of the individual. He also spent all his life in open warfare against racism and colonial neurosis which split his subjectivity as a black man.

The year 1940 disrupted Fanon's untroubled childhood and precipitated him into the turmoil of the Second World War. The fall of France raised serious questions about France's strategic position in its colonies, especially in the Antilles. Admiral Georges Robert was appointed in September 1939 as High Commissioner for the French Antilles. He departed Brest on board *Jean d'Arc* which docked in Fort-de-France on 19 September. In June 1940, *Emile Bertin* docked carrying France's gold reserves. The gunboat *Barfleur*, the *Bearn* carrying 106 planes and 6 oil liners, the *Barham*, the *Kobad*, the *CIP*, the *Limousin*, the *Motrix* and the *Bourgogne* – as well as the *Var* and the *Mebong* – followed suit.³ The Allies were concerned that Pétain might relinquish them to Nazi Germany and that France's fleet and gold reserves might fall into German hands.

On 18 June 1940, General de Gaulle addressed France and its colonies to encourage them to rally behind the forces of Free France. On 24 June 1940, the General Council of Martinique, proclaiming its attachment to France, called upon all Martinicans to fight on the side of the Allies. After a brief moment of procrastination, Admiral Robert came out in support of Pétain, implementing the laws of Vichy France, censoring newspapers and banning Free France's radio broadcasts. Events in Mers el Kebir strengthened Robert's resolve to uphold Pétain's National Revolution and mount a propaganda campaign against de Gaulle. Under the Vichy regime, the white *békés*⁴ dominated the politics of Martinique. Political parties and trade unions were dissolved.

The Robert–Greenslate agreement provided fuel and provisions to Martinique and allowed the French fleet to operate in the Antilles under United States' supervision. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour and the subsequent involvement of the United States in the theatre of the

Second World War changed its relationship with Martinique. Although the United States continued to provide fuel and basic provisions for the survival of Martinique, it imposed a full blockade on Robert on 9 May 1942, which was experienced as an occupation and had serious ramifications for the island's economy. Martinique was henceforth isolated from mainland France; it was also cut off from Africa and the rest of the world. The blockade meant that Martinique had no income as it could no longer export sugar and rum, the two commodities which sustained its economic life. The stranded 2000 sailors in Fort-de-France added to the economic burden of the small island. The population was deprived of basic necessities. Inflation soared and a black market consequently thrived at the expense of the immiserated Martinicans. The population suffered from malnutrition, and the hardship of the Negro stood in sharp contrast to the opulence of the white *békés* and French sailors. This chasm between black and white gave rise to a tidal wave of communism that swept the island at the end of the Second World War and led to the election of Aimé Césaire as a communist deputy to the National Assembly; this phenomenon, which Fanon describes as the proletarianization of Martinique, could be attributed to the dire economic conditions of the black Martinicans and to the concentration of power in the hands of the white *békés*.⁵

France's capitulation in 1940 was experienced as a national calamity. Pétain instituted ideals that went against the grain of the French republican tradition: '*Famille, Travail, Patrie*' – the catchphrase of his National Revolution – came to replace '*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*'. Pétain put in place a fascistic ideology that opened a wedge between the republican constitution he abolished and a conception of society which looked backward to the *ancien régime* – the regime of aristocracy and privileges which was historically represented by the white *békés* in the Antilles. Martinique was abandoned to fend for itself against the excesses of the Robert administration. Vichy France underscored the importance of the French Empire, but the official discourse of its colonial administration was overtly colonial and racist. Despite Vichy repression, Fanon was one of a large number of Martinicans who joined the dissidence. Significantly, and as I will argue in this book, the diremption between Vichy and republican France determined his

relationship with ‘mother’ France and radicalized him, a factor which is overlooked in Albert Memmi’s interpretation of his biography.

Césaire’s political activities at the Schoelcher Lycée, Marcel Manville contends, radicalized the young Fanon who – albeit disillusioned by the Robert regime – still believed in the narrative that he was French.⁶ He initially explained away the racism which he encountered as a manifestation of the fascistic ideology of Vichy France. This racism undermined France’s republican tradition; it shattered the ‘France of ideals’ represented by the figure of the white Madonna in whose embrace the Martinican Negro child was held.⁷ In ‘West Indians and Africans’, Fanon describes the disillusionment – or better still the first ontological drama – of Martinicans who were relegated to the status of second-class citizens.⁸ ‘In Martinique,’ he writes, ‘it is rare to find hardened social positions. The racial problem is covered over by economic discrimination.’ Prior to the war in 1939, interpersonal relations were not determined by ‘epidermal accentuations’. Colour is not a factor because ‘there is a tacit agreement enabling all and sundry to recognize one another as doctors, tradesmen, workers. A Negro worker will be on the side of the mulatto worker against the middle-class Negro. Here we have proof that questions of race are but a superstructure, a mantle, an obscure ideological emanation concealing an economic reality.’⁹

Before the occupation of Fort-de-France in 1939, Fanon claims, describing somebody as ‘very black’ was meant to express neither contempt nor hatred.¹⁰ In ‘West Indians and Africans’, he clearly underplays the significance of race as a determining factor in social stratification, an account which contradicts the theorization he develops in *Black Skin, White Masks*. The main thrust of his argument is that the Vichy occupation of Martinique by Robert’s sailors exacerbated pent-up racial tensions and gave rise to the consciousness of race.

The capitulation of France left Fanon bereft: it was experienced as a sort of ‘murder of the father’.¹¹ He underscores the importance of the four years during which Fort-de-France became ‘submerged by nearly ten thousand Europeans having an unquestionable, but until then latent, racist mentality’.¹² It was latent because, as he explains, ‘the sailors of the *Béarn* or the *Emile-Bertin*, on previous occasions in the course of a week in Fort de France, had not had time to manifest their racial prejudices’.¹³ However, during these four years the mask

dropped and the sailors behaved as ‘authentic racists’. As we will see in Chapter 1, Fanon’s theory of perception is not simply a reformulation of Sartrean existential phenomenology but stems from the lived experience of West Indians who were racially discriminated against. The encounter with racism was vexing for these West Indians whose ontology was challenged as they experienced their ‘first metaphysical experience’.¹⁴ Prior to 1939, and more specifically the arrival of Robert and his sailors, they sought avenues of flight to ‘escape from [their] colour’.¹⁵ Césaire’s claim to authenticity, his affirmation of negritude as a poetics of deliverance for the oppressed Negroes, was a scandal in a society which had thus far identified with white Europeans. Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 explore this ambivalence vis-à-vis negritude.

During the occupation, Martinique was in a state of political paralysis; only *La Voix de la France libre* (The Voice of Free France) broadcasting from London brought some fervour to the political life of the island. The wireless played a crucial part in the radicalization of the young Fanon: he was then an impressionable 18 year old; the BBC’s reports of the war progress and broadcast of de Gaulle’s call to join the Resistance influenced him. On 13 July 1943, the eve of his brother Félix’s wedding, Fanon decided to join the dissidence in Dominica, and after spending two months there he returned with the forces of Free France that liberated Fort-de-France from the Vichy regime. Immediately after he had re-sat his oral examination for the Première Partie du Baccalauréat, he joined the 5th Battalion.

On 12 March 1944, he set off to North Africa on board the *Oregon*. The conscripted Fanon left in the obscurity of the dark, without pomp or military honour, in conditions that recall those endured by slaves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He landed in Casablanca on 30 March and was stationed in Guercif for a month. Manville compares the military camp of Guercif to a ‘Tower of Babel’, a sort of ‘hierarchical cosmopolitanism’ that was composed of different classes, races, cultures and ethnicities, and where French from mainland France, *pièds noirs*,¹⁶ black Antilleans and Africans served side by side.¹⁷ In this hierarchical cosmopolitanism, class differences were reinforced by racial and ethnic barriers; vestimentary habits were markers of ethnic and racial differences. For instance, West Indians donned shorts while black Senegalese were made to wear the ethnic *chechia*.¹⁸ In North

Africa, Fanon grasped the cartography of racism, as well as the semiology of dress codes. He had to negotiate perceptible barriers separating the white Europeans, the colonized natives and black Africans. In 'Algeria Unveiled', he elaborates on the significance of vestimentary habits and this cultural semiology; in *Black Skin, White Masks*, he summons up his experience of colonial racism:

Some ten years ago I was astonished to learn that the North Africans despised men of color. It was absolutely impossible for me to make any contact with the local population. I left Africa and went back to France without having fathomed the reason for this hostility. Meanwhile, certain facts had made me think. The Frenchman does not like the Jew, who does not like the Arab, who does not like the Negro.¹⁹

While serving in the Second World War, racism – or what Manville calls 'hierarchical cosmopolitanism' – opened Fanon's eyes to the reality of French colonialism and its dehumanizing effect in North Africa.

After a brief stay in Meknès, Fanon was transferred to Cherchell and thereafter to Bougie. In June 1944, he was stationed in Oran for a short period before he was moved to the South of France. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he evokes the conditions in which the colonized lived – horrendous conditions which provide a context for Albert Camus's political allegory of the plague in *La Peste*. The department of Oran was in the grip of famine and a devastating typhus epidemic. The sight of deprivation must have brought home to Fanon the realities of *tan robè* ('Robert Time'),²⁰ but this time there was no mistaking that it was free France which subjected the native Algerians to colonial brutality. This was the lesson which the war taught Fanon.

In August 1944, Fanon was part of the 9th Division of Colonial Infantry that landed at the Bay of Saint-Tropez. From Marseille, the division moved northward to close on retreating German troops. In the autumn of 1944, the forces of Free France underwent an operation of 'acclimatization', as the white command decided to 'whiten' or, as Peter Geismar puts it, 'bleach' the division: black African soldiers remained in the South of France; Antilleans, because they were considered Europeans, were moved to the North.²¹ This decision was based not on ethnic, geographical or meteorological considerations but on cultural

factors. Despite the fact that they came from a tropical zone, West Indians were considered Europeans because of their acculturation and linguistic competence. It must be noted in passing that cultural assimilation and its attendant white racism coloured the views of the Antilleans themselves who thought that they were not Negroes. In 'West Indians and Africans' Fanon discusses the debilitating effects which this disavowal of blackness had on Antilleans.

In the Battle of Alsace, in conditions of bitter cold, Fanon encountered the Germans. In the Doubs, near Besançon, he came under fire and sustained a serious injury from mortar shrapnel which kept him out of action for several weeks. It was in these conditions that he voiced his disenchantment with the war. On 12 April 1945, he wrote a letter to his parents in which he renounced the high idealism which motivated his engagement to defend the cause of Free France. 'If I do not return, and if one day you should hear of my death whilst facing the enemy, console one another but never say: he died for a good cause!'²² He dismissed the ideals for which he fought as 'obsolete', and regretted the decision that he had taken to defend the interests of French farmers when the latter never really cared.²³

In 1945, Fanon was awarded the *Croix de guerre* for his bravery by none other than Raoul Salan. Ironically, in the Algerian War, Fanon and General Salan would fight on opposite sides: Fanon became the spokesman of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN); Salan, one of the key proponents of French Algeria, headed the Organisation Armée Secrète (OAS). In April 1945, together with two friends, Manville and Mosole, Fanon went to Toulon. On 8 May 1945, during the celebrations of Victory Day which marked the end of the war, Fanon felt excluded and marginalized. French girls danced in the embrace of American soldiers but refused to dance with Fanon. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he invoked the overt Negrophobic views which these girls displayed when they were among Negroes at dances:

Most of the time the women made involuntary gestures of flight, of withdrawing, their faces filled with a fear that was not feigned. And yet the Negroes who asked them to dance would have been utterly unable to commit any act at all against them, even if they had wished to do so. The behavior of these women is clearly understandable from the standpoint of imagination.²⁴

According to his brother Joby, Fanon was more hurt by this rejection than by the mortar shell which hospitalized him. In *Antilles sans fard*, Manville also relates the feelings of rejection and disappointment felt by Fanon.²⁵ If he felt sympathetic towards Jean Veneuse it was because he shared with the latter the same feeling of abandonment and rejection. In the name of freedom and racial equality, he fought to safeguard mother France from the threat of Nazism, but like Veneuse he was made to feel that he was not worthy of white love.

Disenchanted with the experience of war, Corporal Fanon returned a changed man, marked by the sight of war and devastation as well as by his encounter with racism. He joined the Allied forces to safeguard France's republican tradition, to defend freedom and to fight side by side with his French comrades against bigotry and racism. To his disillusionment, he encountered prejudice and was made conscious of his blackness. He had fought against Nazism – against intolerance, prejudice, narrow-minded and xenophobic nationalism – and yet, ironically, he found himself the subject of racial discrimination in France. He returned to Martinique in horrendous conditions on board a ship carrying freight, the *San Mateo*. The reception of the veterans was disappointingly muted: no pomp and military honour were given to these young men who risked their lives to defend and restore the pride of occupied France.²⁶

After the war, Fanon resumed his studies. He enrolled at the Schoelcher Lycée and upon completion of the baccalaureate, and as a war veteran, he was awarded a scholarship by the French government to study in France. At the beginning of the academic session of 1946 and 1947, he went to Paris. Initially, he enrolled to study dentistry but decided against the course. He moved to Lyon to read psychiatry instead. His stay in Paris – a multicultural city where negritude was celebrated in the 1930s and 1940s – did not last more than three weeks. Paradoxically, he did not like its cultural mix; he jokingly told Manville that Paris did not appeal to him because there were 'too many Negroes'.²⁷ One can identify in Fanon's joke elements of Negrophobia. Did he attempt to escape his blackness, much like Mayotte Capécia who sought to whiten her world? Did he eschew the parochialism of West Indians settled in Paris? Did he yearn to lose himself (much like the Sartrean 'inauthentic' Jew) in the anonymity of the crowd in Lyon? I will return

to these questions in Chapters 1 and 3; it suffices to note at this stage that Fanon wanted to be seen as French interacting with other French.²⁸ In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he evokes the difficulty he encountered in a white society that held him to authenticity: there were no avenues of escape from his blackness. As we will see in Chapter 2, the gaze of the white (child) exposes Fanon and proves to be devastating; it shatters the schema of his corporeality.

Between the First and Second World Wars, West Indian and African students studying in Paris were immersed in a highly stimulating intellectual and political environment. These students came into contact with the writers of the *New Negro* movement. At the time, the phenomenon of expatriation was a source of creativity for hitherto fettered black American artists. France was a very attractive location for these writers and for other expatriates of black American origin. 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. This Pan-Africanism generated a nationalism of colour which took shape in negritude. Two other movements influenced these students: the avant-garde aesthetic of the surrealists and the radical politics of the French Communist Party.

On 1 June 1932, a group of West Indian students (namely Étienne and Thélus Léro, Jules Monnerot, René Ménil, Maurice-Sabat Quitman, Michel Pilotin and Simone Yoyotte)²⁹ launched a journal entitled *Légitime défense*. These students focused primarily on political and cultural issues that were specific to the Antilles. Nevertheless, their literary and political journal was to exert a tremendous influence on other Black African students. Because of its radical propensities, *Légitime défense* was suppressed after its first number in 1934, only to be replaced by *L'Étudiant noir*. The focus was no longer the West Indies but the whole of the African culture.³⁰

The Black West Indian and African students in Paris did not necessarily share the same political commitment. Though Senghor later distanced himself from the Marxist–Leninist movement represented by *Légitime défense* – supported mainly by Étienne Léro, René Ménil and Jules Monnerot – he was keen to associate himself with *L'Étudiant noir*. He did not believe in the importance of politics but rather in the role

of culture, primarily in the poetics of negritude, as an effective instrument to overcome colonialism.³¹

Senghor describes negritude as ‘the ensemble of values of black civilization’.³² Since Césaire coined the term ‘negritude’ in *L’Étudiant noir* in the 1930s, Senghor says, its signification has changed from the struggle against colonial and cultural oppression to the inauguration of a new humanism. In the philanthropic sense of the term, this new humanism, as a system of thought and action concerned with the human race as a whole, necessarily also heralds the liberation of the Negro from the shackles of racism and colonialism. In the academic sense, this humanism embraces the study of literary culture that started with the Renaissance, and as such acknowledges the contribution of African civilizations to Western culture. Senghor uses it as an instrument of struggle against white colonialism and to affirm black identity. It is in this sense that he defines negritude as an affirmation of a negation; that is, a negation of a historical movement that threatens to assimilate and eradicate the difference of the black.³³ In Senghor’s terms,

negritude, by its ontology (that is, its philosophy of being), its moral law and its aesthetic, is a response to the modern humanism that European philosophers and scientists have been preparing since the end of the nineteenth century, and as Teilhard de Chardin and the writers and artists of the mid-twentieth present it.

[...] the African has always and everywhere presented a concept of the world which is diametrically opposed to the traditional philosophy of Europe. The latter is essentially *static, objective, dichotomic*; it is, in fact, dualistic, in that it makes an absolute distinction between body and soul, matter and spirit. It is founded on separation and opposition: on analysis and conflict. The African, on the other hand, conceives the world, beyond the diversity of its forms, as a fundamentally mobile, yet unique, reality that seeks synthesis.³⁴

Cartesian theory holds that knowledge is the outcome of discursive reason, that is, it is accessible only to the *cogito*, the thinking subject. Two hundred years after Descartes, August Comte, the founder of positivism, perceived the history of human knowledge as evolving through three

distinct stages: religion, metaphysics and sciences. Positivism led to the emergence of human sciences, with sociology as a field of scientific research having the individual and society as the objects of its critical investigation. Senghor rejects the dualistic theory of Cartesianism for prioritizing mind over body, and also positivism for removing the subject of intuition from the field of its scientific methodology.³⁵

Senghor acknowledges the indebtedness of negritude to the surrealist movement, namely to the influence of Guillaume Apollinaire, Tristan Tzara and André Breton, who repudiated the values of their bourgeois and capitalist society.³⁶ Moreover, Senghor argues that negritude in turn influenced twentieth-century European culture. In the field of literature, symbolism and surrealism upset the prevalent values of European civilization, which since the Renaissance had ‘rested essentially on discursive reason and facts, on logic and matter’.³⁷ In art, expressionism and cubism abandoned Western conventions of realism and the idea that art imitates reality and is a simulacrum produced according to the requirements of rationality.³⁸

Significantly, in his critique of the Cartesian subject and of the subject of positivism, Senghor attempts to reverse the binary terms of opposition in which one of the terms – that is, black – is denigrated. In his terms, negritude is a revalorization of that which was hitherto denigrated. However, as we shall see in Fanon’s critique of negritude, Senghor reproduces these binary terms, still opposing black and white, European and African, the subject of discursive reason and that of intuition. His notion of negritude (or what he calls ‘*africanité*’) reproduces a Eurocentrism which essentializes the black as ‘authentically’ African.³⁹ Arguably, negritude is nothing but a colonial fabrication, a Western mythology. Put simply, like a good Orientalist who Orientalizes the Orient by fabricating it, Senghor ‘Africanizes the African’.⁴⁰ As we will see in Chapter 6 and in the Conclusion, Fanon delivers a scathing attack on the essentialism of the advocates of negritude and Arabo-Islamism, on what he characterizes as the racialization – or better still the tribalization – of thought, culture and politics, anticipating the critique of Laroui and Said.

Written at the chafing limits of the binary language of body/mind, Fanon’s first book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, is arguably part of the project of revalorizing blackness undertaken by the apostles of the

negritude movement. It is important to bear in mind that Fanon studied in Lyon and was not part of the intellectual circle which contributed to the development of negritude in Paris and that his engagement with the movement was purely literary, as evidenced in his debate with Sartre. Although it inspires Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, the sort of humanism heralded by Senghor is, as we will see in the Conclusion, at odds with the one Fanon proposes in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon has a complex and ambivalent relationship with negritude. He criticizes its advocates, or what he calls ‘men of culture’,⁴¹ for having fallen back on archaic cultural practices which are far removed from the political realities of their colonized societies.

Critics such as Renata Zahar, David Caute and Irene Gendzier consider Fanon’s fascination with negritude as a transitional stage before he rejects it.⁴² Their overriding assumption is that Fanon jettisons negritude and psychoanalysis and becomes more concerned with politics in *The Wretched of the Earth*. However, Fanon’s interest in the subject of psychoanalysis does not wane in *Toward the African Revolution* and in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In fact, the closing chapter of the latter provides an insightful psychoanalytical interpretation of the pernicious effects of colonial violence on the psychological constitution of colonized Algerians. Undoubtedly there is a noticeable change in Fanon’s approach to the issue of negritude. In *Black Skin, White Masks* his perspective is psychoanalytical, while in *Toward the African Revolution* and *The Wretched of the Earth* his take on the issue becomes highly politicized. Jock McCulloch’s contention that ‘Fanon becomes *more* rather than *less* sympathetic to negritude with the passing of time’⁴³ is misleading. McCulloch mistakes negritude as a cultural movement (what Fanon calls ‘Negroism’ espoused by ‘men of culture’) and negritude as the consciousness of race. As we will see in the Conclusion, Memmi makes the same mistake in his rebuttal of Fanon. However, McCulloch is right to argue that Fanon grapples with the issue of blackness (that is, the consciousness of race) in all his works. He is, though, wrong to suggest that this continued critical engagement with negritude demonstrates Fanon’s endorsement of its ideology. In his statement to the Second Congress of Black Artists and Writers in Rome (1959), reproduced as a chapter ‘On National Culture’ in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon severs his visceral ties with negritude.

As becomes evident in Chapter 6, Fanon rejects negritude on the same grounds as he dismisses the mythologizing rhetoric of the exponents of the Arabo-Islamic cultural past.

Before engaging with the political motives which led Fanon to take such a stance, it will be useful to examine his ambivalent views vis-à-vis negritude. His debate with its followers can be traced back to *Black Skin, White Masks*. He sketches the initial lines of his critique thus:

[...] what is often called the black soul is a white man's artifact.

The educated Negro, slave of the spontaneous and cosmic Negro myth, feels at a given stage that his race no longer understands him.

Or that he no longer understands it.

Then he congratulates himself on this, and enlarging the difference, the incomprehension, the disharmony, he finds in them the meaning of his real humanity. Or more rarely he wants to belong to his people. And it is with rage in his mouth and abandon in his heart that he buries himself in the vast black abyss. We shall see that this attitude, so heroically absolute, renounces the present and the future in the name of a mythical past.⁴⁴

In the concluding pages of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon adopts Sartre's position that negritude's anti-racist racism cannot be an end in itself. He clearly realizes the dangers of its totalizing and essentialist rhetoric and therefore refuses to 'derive [his] basic purpose from the past of the peoples of color'.⁴⁵ He refuses now 'to exalt the past at the expense of [his] present and [his] future' and to dedicate himself to an opaque and 'unrecognizable Negro civilization'.⁴⁶ He rightly points out that if the Indo-Chinese are rebelling against French colonialism, it is not because they had a great civilization in the distant past, but because they are oppressed. Likewise, what the peoples of colour are rebelling against is their condition as oppressed peoples. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon elaborates further on this issue. He remarks that praising and proclaiming the greatness of the Songhai civilization will not change the circumstances of the exploited and underfed Songhais.⁴⁷ Obviously, Fanon's critique takes on a political turn. The suffering of the Negroes, as well as the colonized, must be sought not just at the

level of culture and subjectivity, but at the level of history and politics. This critique of negritude is implicit in *Black Skin, White Masks* and explicit in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Arguably, his discussion of Hegel and the Negro in *Black Skin, White Masks* foreshadows his incendiary language in *The Wretched of the Earth*. However, and in spite of the latent violence lurking behind his psychoanalysis, Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* still believes in the possibilities of assimilation into French society.

In 'West Indians and Africans', Fanon attempts to further outline and deconstruct 'the affective complexes that could oppose West Indians and Africans'.⁴⁸ Written three years after *Black Skin, White Masks*, his article examines the ambivalent relation which the Antilleans had with Africa, showing that such complexes alienated West Indians from themselves. Prior to 1939, they felt not only superior but fundamentally different to Africans. They were, however, oblivious to the fact that they were victims of colonialism and that they suffered 'the tragedy of being neither white nor Negro'.⁴⁹ In Africa, discrimination was manifestly open and brutal; it amputated the Negroes and denied their humanity. In Martinique, on the other hand, 'there was no racial barrier, no discrimination', but just that 'ironic spice' which coloured the Martinican mentality giving rise to a latent racism.⁵⁰

An examination of Fanon's analysis of race relations in Martinique may help us grasp his complex views on negritude and adumbrate the itinerary of his thinking which ultimately led him to reject negritude and Frenchness. According to Fanon, prior to the Second World War – that is, before the West Indians encountered the racism of the French sailors who were blockaded in Fort-de-France – social relations were not determined by racial factors but by the economic interests of the various social classes.⁵¹ The West Indians never perceived themselves as Negroes. 'In every West Indian, before the war of 1939,' he contends, 'there was not only the certainty of a superiority over the African, but the certainty of a fundamental difference. The African was a Negro and the West Indian a European.'⁵² Before the War, Fanon points out, 'no spontaneous claim of Negritude rang forth'.⁵³ The West Indians donned a white mask: they lived, thought, dreamed like white Europeans.⁵⁴ However, after encountering French sailors, 'the West Indian was obliged,

under the pressure of European racists, to abandon positions which were essentially fragile, because they were absurd, because they were incorrect, because they were alienating'.⁵⁵ This realization was liberating; it brought into existence a 'new generation' which firmly believed that '[t]he West Indian of 1945 [was] a Negro'.⁵⁶ As will be argued in Chapter 3, Fanon's rebuttal of Capécia is a critique of these positions which are 'incorrect' and 'alienating' because they are Negrophobic.

The West Indians' encounter with the racism of the French sailors precipitated them into what Fanon calls their 'first metaphysical experience'. Racism profoundly impacted their very existence, forcing them to defend their 'virtuous colour'.⁵⁷ As Fanon explains, 'before ten thousand racists, the West Indian felt obliged to defend himself. Without Césaire this would have been difficult for him.'⁵⁸ This change of attitude 'amounted to nothing less than requiring the West Indian to recast his world, to undergo a metamorphosis of his body. It meant demanding of himself an axiological activity in reverse, a valorization of what he had rejected.'⁵⁹

Racism brought about the consciousness of race and radicalized the Martinicans in two ways. Not only did it lead them to rally behind de Gaulle – who convinced them that 'France, *their* France, had not lost the war but traitors had sold it out'⁶⁰ – it also gave rise to class consciousness. As Fanon maintains, 'the demonstrations on the occasion of the Liberation, which were held in the West Indies, in any case in Martinique, in the months of July and August 1943, were the consequence of the birth of the proletariat'.⁶¹ The coming-into-consciousness coincided with the proletarianization of Martinique which 'for the first time systematized its political consciousness'. Pithily put: 'the first metaphysical experience, or if one prefers, ontological experiment, coincided with the first political experiment'⁶² and this experiment was negritude and the radical political propensities to subvert the colonial narrative. If August Comte considered 'the proletarian as systematic philosopher', Fanon is adamant that 'the proletarian of Martinique [was] a systematized Negro'.⁶³

After the war, Martinicans discovered that they were Negroes. The movement of negritude provided them with a defence mechanism to overcome racism: it helped them come to terms with the 'facticity' of

their blackness. The movement empowered them to go back to their roots, to black Africa,

with their hearts full of hopes, eager to rediscover the source, to suckle at the authentic breasts of the African earth. The West Indians, civil servants and military, lawyers and doctors, landing in Dakar, were distressed at not being sufficiently black. Fifteen years before, they said to the Europeans, 'Don't pay attention to my black skin, it's the sun that has burned me, my soul is as white as yours'. After 1945 they changed their tune. They said to the Africans, 'Don't pay attention to my white skin, my soul is as black as yours, and that is what matters.'⁶⁴

Having rediscovered that they were the descendants of transplanted Negro slaves, the West Indians immersed themselves in the poetry of negritude and 'aspired only to one thing: to plunge into the great "black hole"'.⁶⁵

Césaire's celebration of blackness helped the West Indians come into consciousness. The political awakening of the West Indians as an exploited class would not have been possible without negritude.⁶⁶ In 'West Indians and Africans', Fanon assigns a progressive role to negritude: the espousal of negritude coincided with the coming-into-consciousness – that is, the 'proletarianization' – of the black West Indians who were exploited by a white ideology.⁶⁷ However, after the 'great white error', Fanon comes to the realization that the poetic dreams of negritude were nothing but a 'great black mirage'.⁶⁸ He criticizes the essentialist rhetoric of negritude. In his view, the Negro experience cannot be generalized: there is not one Negro, but there are Negroes. Negritude casts the Negro people into a shadowy anonymity, obliterating their historical, cultural, national and ethnic differences. Different nationalities traverse the facticity of blackness. The expression 'Negro people' is devoid of any meaning for Fanon. It replicates the racist language which refuses to acknowledge cultural difference. As he puts it concisely: 'The object of lumping all the Negroes together under the designation of "Negro people" is to deprive them of any possibility of individual expression.'⁶⁹ Fanon deconstructs the totalizing representation of negritude that 'all Negroes agree on certain things,

that they share the principle of communion'. He aptly argues that 'there is nothing, *a priori*, to warrant the assumption that such a thing as a Negro people exists'.⁷⁰ In his view, the followers of negritude advocate a return to a cultural past which is far removed from current political reality; negritude is nothing but a 'great black mirage', the 'black abyss' in which the cultural, historical and national differences of the blacks are obfuscated and lost.⁷¹

In 'Racism and Culture', published at the height of the Algerian War, Fanon explains that what made the return of the revolutionary Algerians to the past *historical* was the fact that their 'plunge into the chasm of the past [was] the condition and the source of freedom'.⁷² It consolidated the nation and enabled it to take roots. But in the case of the advocates of negritude, he observes:

Rediscovering tradition, living it as a defence mechanism, as a symbol of purity, of salvation, the decultured individual leaves the impression that the mediation takes vengeance by substantializing itself. This falling back on archaic positions having no relation to technical development is paradoxical. The institutions thus valorized no longer correspond to the elaborate methods of action already mastered.

The culture put into capsules, which has vegetated since the foreign domination, is revalorized. It is not reconceived, grasped anew, dynamized from within. It is shouted. And this headlong, unstructured, verbal revalorization conceals paradoxical attitudes.⁷³

Such attitudes express for Fanon a form of exoticism which 'allows no cultural confrontation', no revolutionary praxis for a genuine decolonization.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon adds to his critique of negritude. As we will see in Chapter 1, his argument runs counter to Sartre's views in *Black Orpheus*: the poetry of negritude is not revolutionary. Fanon makes a clear distinction between the *revolutionary* and *acculturated* elite, between the former engaged with current political struggle and the latter dubbed 'men of culture', namely the apostles of negritude who rediscovered their own culture which they had hitherto jettisoned

in favour of the French one. In Fanon's view, the culture they sought to recover was not a living culture; it was a 'mummified culture', an ensemble of 'characteristics', of curiosities, of exotic things.⁷⁴

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon analyses the psychological effects which acculturation had on the native elite. By donning the mask of metropolitan white culture, this acculturated elite expressed an exoticism vis-à-vis the native culture they had previously relinquished and deprecated – an exoticism which represented it negatively from a position of exteriority. However, during the period of decolonization, the same elite abandoned the culture of the colonizer in which they had until then been assimilated and sought anchorage in their native culture. 'In order to ensure his salvation and to escape from the supremacy of the white man's culture,' Fanon argues, 'the native feels the need to turn backwards towards his unknown roots and to lose himself at whatever cost in his own barbarous people.'⁷⁵ Evoking the example of negritude, Fanon remarks: 'If in the world of poetry this movement reaches unaccustomed heights, the fact remains that in the real world the intellectual often follows up a blind alley.'⁷⁶ Fanon dismisses the attempt of the native elite to rehabilitate the native culture as nothing but 'a banal search of exoticism'.⁶² This banal exoticism is epitomized by Senghor and the advocates of negritude who spent their time Africanizing the African, or rather negrifying the Negro, in order to liberate themselves from colonial racism and its stereotypical language. As Fanon puts it: 'Finding your fellow countrymen sometimes means in this phase to will to be a nigger, not a nigger like all other niggers but a real nigger, a Negro cur, just the sort of nigger that the white man wants you to be.'⁷⁷

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon irrevocably dismisses negritude as an anachronistic ideology, along with its essentialist rhetoric which reproduces the racist assumption of the colonizer. This rejection is unequivocal. He laments that men of culture in Africa were marching toward a nebulous culture – a culture that is cut off from the events of today, a mummified culture, a 'culture in capsules' – and that their movement was not chiefly orientated towards decolonization and the consolidation of national culture.⁷⁸ In Chapter 6, I will return to elaborate further on the significance of culture as the site of anti-colonial struggle. Let me now hasten to make some brief remarks

on Fanon's project of decolonization, the issue of violence and his neo-humanism.

Fanon's political project in *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* can be best comprehended in the context of the political activism of French Algerian Liberals and their avowed desire to work for French and Muslim coexistence.⁷⁹ The chapter that he devotes to European and Jewish ethnic minorities in Algeria expresses this desire. However, as Ferhat Abbas forcefully argues, the activities of the *ultras*⁸⁰ jeopardized any possibility of cohabitation and intensified hatred and violence. Arguably, Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* is written as the epilogue to this hatred and violence. A number of critics misinterpret Fanon's political project by abstracting his discussion on violence from its historical context.

Whilst criticizing the Liberal Left in the articles he wrote two years earlier, in 1957, for *El Moudjahid*, he clearly solicits their political support in *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*. The chapter 'Algeria's European Minority' is footnoted by two accounts: one by Yvon Bresson, a police officer who worked as an FLN agent; the other is written by Fanon's colleague, Geronimi. In line with Ramdane Abane's political project to inaugurate a multicultural Algeria, Fanon seeks to establish the foundation for a rapprochement between the Algerians and the Europeans. He is keenly aware that the definition of nationality is up for grabs in post-independence Algeria, where Europeans, Jews, Berbers and Arabs will play a key role in the reality of an Algerian nation governed by democratic political institutions. In stark contrast with the opening chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, the tone of his essay is conciliatory. Fanon's project is clear: 'We want an Algeria open to all, in which every kind of genius may grow.'⁸¹

The Fanonian conception of the 'new man' as outlined in *The Wretched of the Earth* has its roots in *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*. Two pointers are needed to define this conception: first, the mummified society is rendered dynamic by revolutionary praxis, and the 'reality of the nation' gives rise to the new man; second, the tone of the book is conciliatory – in its attempt to consolidate the unity of the movement, the book glosses over the internal divisions in an effort to reconcile ethnic minorities, European and indigenous, Christian, Jew and Muslim. Fanon's incendiary discourse in the preface of *Studies in a Dying*

Colonialism announces the rhetoric of violence as a necessary conclusion to colonialism in *The Wretched of the Earth*. A number of critics misinterpret Fanon's point on violence: it is not the death of the European, or more precisely the French, that Fanon wills, but rather the symbolic death of colonialism which he considers the preamble to the new humanism which decolonization will usher in.

The Second World War destroyed two myths: the myth that France was an invincible colonial power and the myth that France was the beacon of republican tradition. Like Fanon, the Algerians who fought side by side with French soldiers were disillusioned after the war; and because they were not treated on the same terms of equality as the French, they found themselves in the ranks of the FLN. The brutal repression of the 1945 uprising announced the armed struggle of the Algerian people. Violence beget violence: to paraphrase Fanon, the Algerians understood that the only language that the French colonizer comprehended was violence. The specificity of the Algerian context shaped Fanon's views on violence and decolonization. His reference in *The Wretched of the Earth* to the 1945 uprising makes this amply clear.⁸² Throughout the history of Algeria's colonization, politics achieved nothing. A hundred years after the Constitution of the Second Republic annexed Algeria to French territory, the Algerians were at the margins of the political process, deprived of the right of political representation as citizens. The ballot box, as the 1948 elections proved, was always rigged and could not help emancipate the Algerians. Their armed struggle – which came to symbolize for Fanon the revolution of Africa as a whole – strengthened his belief in the Hegelian axiom that freedom was something that could not be given but must be fought for.

At the Accra Conference held in December 1958, Fanon with the Algerian delegation (headed by Ahmed Boumendjel and Chauki Mostefai) sought to mobilize support of the African Nations, and 'Concerning Violence' draws its significance from the conference's resolutions and more specifically from its stance on Algeria's armed struggle.⁸³ Alluding to Nkrumah's opening speech, he writes: 'We have nothing to lose but our chains and we have an immense continent to win.'⁸⁴ Algeria's 'legalist nationalism' failed to resolve the Algerian problem and the armed struggle was an exemplar for nationalist movements in Africa. 'The Algerian war,' Fanon points out, 'had in

fact a decisive bearing on this Congress. For the first time, it was realized, a colonialism waging war in Africa proves itself powerless to win.⁸⁵ In *El Moudjahid*, he writes the obituary of European colonialism in Africa: 'In the settlement of colonies of the type of Kenya, Algeria and South Africa,' he contends 'there is unanimity: only armed struggle will bring about the defeat of the occupying nation.'⁸⁶ He presents the armed struggle as 'a continuous, sustained action, constantly being reinforced, which contains in its development the collapse and the death of French colonialism in Africa'.⁸⁷

In Ghana, Fanon met a number of prominent nationalist figures – Ahmed Sékou Touré (Guinea), Félix Moumié (leader of the *Union du Peuple Camerounais* (UPC)), Robert Holden (leader of the *União dos Povos de Angola* (UPA)) and Patrice Lumumba (leader of the *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC)). Fanon was inspired by Nkrumah's vision of the united states of Africa and worked hard to realize African unity.⁸⁸ However, he was cognizant of the fact that tribalism divided the continent – and neo-colonialist agents, in the pay of colonial Europe, compromised such a vision.

Fanon defended Algeria's armed struggle and sought to emulate the Algerian Revolution in other African countries. As David Macey remarks, '[h]is hugely successful performance in Accra also helped to promote the image of Fanon as the apostle of violence three years before the publication of *Les Damnés de la terre*'.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the armed struggle in Algeria was the exception rather than the rule. Algeria seemed to furnish Fanon with a conception of the revolution (or better still decolonization) where violence is presented as the 'midwife of history'.⁹⁰ In all the conferences that he attended, he sought to unite the Africans in their struggle to shake off colonialism. He fought stubbornly against the tide of neo-colonialism, against the politics of compromise and resignation.⁹¹ Léopold Senghor and Félix Houphouët were a case in point of such politics. As colonialism entered its death throes in Africa, de Gaulle proposed in the referendum of September 1958 that African countries could opt for self-determination provided they maintained close political ties with France. Senghor and Houphouët (representing respectively Senegal and Ivory Coast) backed de Gaulle's proposal, while Sékou Touré voted for independence.⁹² Fanon commended Sékou Touré for his political stance and endorsed Nkrumah's

Pan-African politics which constituted a front of political resistance against de Gaulle's neo-colonialist politics. Fanon was of the view that if de Gaulle was willing to grant French colonies in Africa independence, it was because he had no choice: France had overcommitted itself in a costly war in Algeria and could not contain the tide of decolonization which was sweeping the continent.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes the epiphany of what was to take place in post-independence Algeria, Africa and the Third World and exposes how the nationalist elements, in the pay of neo-colonialism, deceived the African people. To be sure, his critique points to the pitfalls of nationalism, to the *bourgeoisement* of the revolutionary movement, to the establishment of the one-party state, to the concentration of power in the army which became the arbiter between the people and the leadership. He did not, however, live to see how post-independence politics betrayed his view of Algeria's revolutionary movement as the paragon of a new brand of socialistic humanism for a unified Africa.

Sartre maintained that *The Wretched of the Earth* did not need a preface, but he nevertheless wrote one 'to carry the dialectic through to the end': the decolonization of the people of Europe and the extirpation of the colonialist that lived within them. The preface echoes his tumultuous outcry in 'Colonialism Is a System':

We, the people of mainland France, have only a lesson to draw from these facts: colonialism is in the process of destroying itself. But it still fouls the atmosphere. It is our shame; it mocks our laws or caricatures them. It affects us with its racism; as the Montpellier episode proved the other day, it obliges our young men to die for the Nazi principles that we fought against 10 years ago; it attempts to defend itself by arousing fascism even here in France. Our role is to help it to die not only in Algeria but wherever it exists.⁹³

Sartre's project is ostensibly to decolonize France and old colonial Europe. It is my argument in this volume that Fanon is driven by the same necessity as Sartre to decolonize both colonizer and colonized. As I will show in the concluding chapter, Fanon conceives of the

'being-of-decolonization', in Sartrean existential phenomenological terms, as a new form of (inter)nationalism.

In the hectic months before his death, Fanon was able to read and digest Sartre's voluminous and complex *Critique de la raison dialectique*, which provided him with a critical framework to analyse violence in Algeria and conceive of the Third World as a massive 'project' of both decolonization and re-humanizing politics; within this framework, decolonization was essentially 'a form of praxis, or purposeful human action determined by a project, that responds to and negates the primal and endemic violence of colonization'.⁹⁴ To be sure, violence as a praxis challenged colonial racism and allowed Fanon to make his pronouncement that the violence of decolonization was humanistic, announcing the emergence of 'new' humanity. It was 'quite simply the replacing of a certain "species" of men by another "species" of men'; it was a sort of *tabula rasa*: 'The last shall be first and the first last' – the overhauling of the whole social structure from bottom up.⁹⁵ In 'National Independence: The Only Possible Outcome', Fanon affirms, 'Independence descended from the sky of ideal possibilities. It has become flesh and life, has been incorporated into the very substance of the people.'⁹⁶ In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon describes decolonization in biblical terms, evoking the second coming that the First shall be last, the Last first. But this eschatology announces the end of history – the history of colonialism and the advent of new humanism.

From the Algerian of the colonial period, a new man has sprung, the Algerian of the era of independence. This Algerian rediscovers his personality in action, discipline, the sense of responsibilities, and rediscovers the real that he takes fully in hand and transforms by renewing efficient relations with it. He becomes a responsible citizen.⁹⁷

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, elaborating on one of the key themes of *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, Fanon argues that decolonization is a revolutionary movement which radically changes people and social structures. Decolonization, he writes, 'influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's

floodlights upon them.⁹⁸ The violence of decolonization is not gratuitous: it announces the end of colonialism and gives birth to ‘new men’. In Fanon’s words: ‘it brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity’.⁹⁹ Fanon’s project is not to celebrate violence per se but the advent of a new humanism. Fanon considers decolonization as a creative process, a ‘veritable creation of men’, and it is thanks to this phenomenon that the colonized, ‘the “thing” which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself’.¹⁰⁰

In its exploration of Fanon’s project of decolonization and his humanism, this book comprising six chapters covers a number of different issues. For the sake of coherence, and to knit them in a cohesive structure, it is important to adumbrate clearly the terms of my problematic. A great deal has been written about Fanon’s interest in psychoanalysis and sexual politics in *Black Skin, White Masks* and his revolutionary praxis in *The Wretched of the Earth*. What has been thus far overlooked in Fanonian scholarship is the ethical dimension of his psychiatry and politics. This book attempts to remedy this oversight by engaging with Fanon’s humanism and its ethical preoccupation.

In this regard, Chapter 1 offers an exploration of the influence of Sartre on Fanon, establishing that his ethics is predicated on Sartrean Marxist existential phenomenology. As we will see, Fanon problematizes the Sartrean ‘doubling of the fundamental relation with the Other’. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, the conflict is not just phenomenological but also historical, affecting the Negro’s body and un/conscious. Fanon does not discover himself in the midst of the crowd, as a person among other people. Racism corrupts intersubjective relations and attenuates Sartre’s existential phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception; the relationship between the body and the world (that is, ‘*le schéma corporel*’ or what he terms the ‘historical bodily schema’) is racialized and Fanon apprehends his embodied self as an object in the world.

Chapter 2 undertakes a poststructuralist and deconstructive interpretation of Fanon. Demonstrably, such an interpretation discounts the significance of Sartre in Fanon’s work. As I will argue in this chapter, the dissembling of self in *Black Skin, White Masks* is not a deconstructive and poststructuralist metaphorical device. It is my intention to show

how Bhabha's postcolonial readings of Fanon depart from and go beyond the Fanon brief. In fact, these readings go against Fanon's thought. Nevertheless, in his preface to Richard Philcox's *The Wretched of the Earth*, 'Foreword: Framing Fanon', Bhabha raises a host of pertinent questions about the relevance of Fanon's work today, about his humanism and ethics, about violence, decolonization and neo-colonialism in the post-independence period, and about his politics in the age of globalization. Over the course of this book, I will engage with these questions and argue that Fanon's (inter)nationalism – what Bhabha calls transnationalism – is not a feature of the 'ontological split', that is, the deconstruction of the bond which grounds subject/identity and history to a specific geographical location; on the contrary, it is anchored in history. Fanon makes it clear that the colonized's entry into history is of fundamental importance to the process of decolonization. While linking the idea of identity with history and territory, Fanon warns against the nefarious consequences of narrow and xenophobic nationalism. His brand of nationalism is internationalist and is predicated upon an ethics which acknowledges and recognizes differences.

Chapter 3 explores the ways in which Fanon *epidermalizes* language and sexuality, underscoring that the Symbolic is marked by the dimension of race and ethnicity. The significance of this dimension is crucial in developing a feminist critique, an approach which is timely but beyond the scope of my project in this book. The focus of this chapter is on Fanon's censure of Negrophobia's colouring of language and sexuality. Nonetheless, it is important to caution against a critique which obfuscates this dimension or which uses the issue of race to colour an ethnocentric white feminism. It is also important to go beyond a strictly Freudian/Lacanian interpretation of gender/sexual politics to explore psychoanalytical notions, such as 'the family romance' or 'in the name of the father', in the light of France's colonial paternalism and practice of slavery. Colonial racism thwarted intersubjective relations and also undermined the universality of France's republican institutions. I appropriate Freud's 'family romance' to throw into sharp relief the contradictions at the core of this universality, demonstrating that these institutions did not create fraternal ties between black and white but were rather at the origin of their alienation.

Chapter 4 is concerned primarily with the involvement of medicine in the colonization of Algeria. It also examines the contradictions inherent within the assimilationist rhetoric which legitimated colonialism and the attendant violence it engendered. As we will see, France's republican institutions played a key role in imperializing Algeria and expropriating its people. Fanon identifies colonialism as the root cause of the colonized's alienation in both senses of the term, psychological and political: colonialism brought about the madness of the colonized, as well as their dispossession and uprooting. This chapter shows how colonialism engendered madness, while Chapter 5 describes the historical processes which determined the expropriation of the peasantry and its deracination.

Chapter 5, drawing on Marx's and Sartre's critiques of French colonialism in Algeria, elaborates further on these processes which ultimately created an indigenous lumpenproletariat. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon throws into sharp relief the pitfalls of nationalism and the shortcomings of some Marxist concepts as tools to grasp the Manichaeic economy of colonial and postcolonial society. My task in this chapter is not only to problematize orthodox Marxism for overlooking the colonial question and to show that Fanon envisages the Revolution as a peasant revolution, but also to recover the complex historical specificities which determined the notion of the lumpenproletariat in Fanon's work – a notion which is appropriated by Peter Stallybrass and Ranjana Khanna without considering its colonial history.

Chapter 6 undertakes a study of one of the most insidious forms of alienation, prevalent in Arabo-Islamic society, namely the traditionalization of culture and its promotion as an emblem of nationality. As I will argue in this chapter, Abdallah Laroui develops Fanon's analysis of this sort of alienation, drawing on his critique of negritude and its mystification of culture. Unlike Fanon, Laroui assigns to the proletariat – led by the organic intellectual – a crucial role in overcoming the alienation and retardation of the colonized society. Abdelkabar Khatibi dismisses Fanon's and Laroui's historicism as fanciful theorizing and proposes a pluralistic view of culture supported by technical and scientific developments. Sadly, these developments did not pave the way to a genuine decolonization as envisaged by Khatibi, but instead maintained an unfettered neo-liberalism which generated unspeakable violence.

Drawing on the work of Edward Said, I will elaborate further on Fanon's views on the pitfalls of nationalism and on neo-liberal capitalism and the attendant cultural chaos it engendered.

In this book, I provide an extended discussion of Fanon's ambivalent relationship with negritude and of the importance of national culture in the process of decolonization. My project is twofold: first, to assess the legacy of Fanon by focusing my discussion on Laroui, Khatibi, Bhabha and Said; second, to demonstrate that culture is constitutive, a site of ideological struggle and political resistance, and that it is also an instrument of cultural imperialism. The book engages with various aspects of Fanon's work, examining the ways in which Fanon is appropriated by postcolonial theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha, by feminists like Gwen Bergner and by cultural materialists such as Peter Stallybrass. Moreover, the book adumbrates the influences which impacted on his psychiatric practice and politics – these influences are wide and range from existential phenomenology, to psychoanalysis and Marxism. I will endeavour to read Fanon's work in a new way, moving the discussion beyond the sterile debates which impose on Fanon's work a bifid structure, opposing early and late Fanon, his psychoanalysis in *Black Skin, White Masks* and his revolutionary praxis in *The Wretched of the Earth*. It is important to resist critical approaches which discount the specificities of his work: theories which read him as a pseudo-Marxist or as a poststructuralist *avant la lettre* and which valorize his psychoanalysis without considering his politics. My aim is to present a reading which takes into account the plurality of perspectives in his work and more importantly its ethical dimension. I hope to show that an anthropological view of the subject – as a totality constituted of the biological, the sociological, the historical and psychological – defines his psychiatry and politics. In evidence is his humanism in his psychiatry and politics. Critics who might have applauded him for his contribution to the war efforts in the Second World War – but excoriated him for joining the ranks of the FLN – fail to see that the idealism which motivated Fanon to join the dissidence spurred him to fight French colonialism in Algeria. In both instances, Fanon sought to uphold the republican and democratic institutions. His humanism is shaped by these institutions which he fought to protect from the threat of fascism in the Second World War and from

colonialism during the Algerian War. In a letter he sent to Roger Taïeb from his deathbed, Fanon wrote:

what I want to say is that death is always close by, and what's important is not to know if you can avoid it, but to know that you have done the most possible to realize your ideas. What shocks me here in this bed, as I grow weaker, is not that I'm dying, but I'm dying in Washington of leukaemia considering that I could have died in battle with the enemy three months ago when I knew I had this disease. We are nothing on earth if we are not, first of all, slaves of a cause, the cause of the people, the cause of justice, the cause of liberty.¹⁰¹

Racism thwarts human relations. In his work, Fanon sought to restore health to these relations and he fought twice, risking his life, to safeguard France's institutions. It must be said that Fanon spent all his life fighting to uphold the cause of justice and freedom. He enlisted in the Second World War to fight Nazi Germany and defend France. It was no contradiction for Fanon to take up arms against France and serve the causes of the Algerian people, of Africa and of the Third World.

Notes

- 1 Peter Geismar, *Fanon* (New York: The Dial Press, 1971), p. 185.
- 2 Joby Fanon, *Frantz Fanon: De la Martinique à l'Algérie et à l'Afrique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), pp. 20–21. Biographical details relating to Fanon's family background and education were, by and large, taken from this source. Some details come from Geismar's *Fanon*, from Irene Gendzier's *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study* (London: Wildwood House Ltd, 1973), from Alice Cherki's *Frantz Fanon, Portrait* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2000) and from David Macey's *Frantz Fanon, A Life* (London: Granta, 2000).
- 3 Armand Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique*, vol. 3 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), p. 15.
- 4 The Créole term *békés* refers to white French/European settlers in Martinique.
- 5 Frantz Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', in *Toward the African Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1970), p. 34.

- 6 Marcel Manville, 'Témoignage d'un ami et d'un compagnon de lutte', in Elo Dacy (ed.), *L'actualité de Frantz Fanon, Actes de colloque de Brazzaville* (Paris: Karthala, 1986), p. 13.
- 7 Manville, 'Témoignage d'un ami et d'un compagnon de lutte', p. 15.
- 8 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', pp. 33-34.
- 9 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 28.
- 10 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 28.
- 11 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 32.
- 12 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 32.
- 13 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 32.
- 14 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 31.
- 15 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 31.
- 16 The term *pieds noirs* refers to European settlers in colonial Algeria.
- 17 Manville, 'Témoignage d'un ami et d'un compagnon de lutte', p. 17.
- 18 A fez or red hat with a tassel on top.
- 19 Frantz Fanon, *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs (Black Skin, White Masks)* [1952], trans. Charles Lam Markmann (Pluto Press, London, 1986), pp. 102-103.
- 20 David Macey is right to observe that 'Tan Robè and its aftermath had an incalculable effect on the young Fanon, who now began to learn precisely what it meant to be a black Martinican wearing a white mask' (Macey, *Frantz Fanon, A Life*, p. 78).
- 21 Geismar, *Fanon*, p. 38.
- 22 Fanon, *Frantz Fanon: De la Martinique à l'Algérie et à l'Afrique*, p. 69.
- 23 Fanon, *Frantz Fanon: De la Martinique à l'Algérie et à l'Afrique*, p. 69.
- 24 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 156.
- 25 Marcel Manville, *Les Antilles sans fard* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992).
- 26 Cherki, *Frantz Fanon, Portrait*, p. 23.
- 27 Manville, 'Témoignage d'un ami et d'un compagnon de lutte', p. 20.
- 28 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 118.
- 29 Lilyan Kesteloot, *Les Ecrivains noirs de langue française: naissance d'une littérature* (Brussels: Edition de l'Institut de Sociologie de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1965), p. 26.
- 30 Gendzier, *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study*, p. 40. Furthermore, the journal *Revue du Monde noir*, founded by the Martinican Paulette Nardal and sponsored by the Haitian Doctor Léo Sajous, exerted an influence on the followers of Negritude (cf. L.S. Senghor, *Ce que je crois* (Paris: Grasset, 1988), p. 137).
- 31 Senghor, *Ce que je crois*, p. 143.
- 32 Senghor, *Ce que je crois*, p. 137 and p. 158.
- 33 Kesteloot, *Les Ecrivains noirs*, p. 112.

- 34 L.S. Senghor, 'Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century', in P. Williams and L. Chrisman (eds), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 30.
- 35 Senghor, *Ce que je crois*, pp. 209–210.
- 36 Senghor, *Ce que je crois*, pp. 216–217.
- 37 Senghor, 'Negritude', p. 28.
- 38 Senghor, 'Negritude', p. 32.
- 39 Tsenay Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 49.
- 40 Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, p. 47.
- 41 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 168.
- 42 J. McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact: Fanon's Psychology and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 35.
- 43 McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact*, p. 36.
- 44 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 16.
- 45 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 226.
- 46 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 226.
- 47 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 168.
- 48 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 27.
- 49 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 36.
- 50 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 36.
- 51 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 28.
- 52 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 30.
- 53 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 31.
- 54 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 36.
- 55 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 36.
- 56 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 35.
- 57 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 33.
- 58 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 33.
- 59 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 34.
- 60 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 33.
- 61 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 34.
- 62 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 34.
- 63 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 34.
- 64 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 35.
- 65 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 37.
- 66 Not only did the West Indians espouse wholeheartedly the ideology of negritude, but they also supported Césaire's radical politics. After the end of the Second World War, two out of three deputies elected were of a communist political persuasion and Césaire was one of them.

- 67 McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact*, p. 43.
- 68 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 37.
- 69 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 27.
- 70 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 28.
- 71 Fanon, 'West Indians and Africans', p. 37. See also Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 16.
- 72 Fanon, 'Racism and Culture', p. 53.
- 73 Fanon, 'Racism and Culture', p. 52.
- 74 Fanon, 'Racism and Culture', pp. 44-45.
- 75 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 175.
- 76 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 177.
- 77 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 178.
- 78 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 175.
- 79 Macey, *Frantz Fanon, A Life*, p. 401. It is important to bear in mind that the European minority – be it of Jewish faith or liberal political persuasion – played a key role in the Algerian Revolution. Liberals – 'like Jacques Chevalier, Jean-Marie Tiné, Jean-Pierre Gonon, Perrin, Alexandre Chaulet and his children, Lucien Biterlin and others' – worked to promote a genuine Franco-Muslim fraternization and to maintain the French element in an independent Algeria.
- 80 The word *ultras* refers to the extremists who represented colonial fascism and sought to maintain French colonialism in Algeria. Ferhat Abbas, *Autopsie d'une guerre* (Paris: Garnier, 1980), p. 302.
- 81 Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 1989), p. 32.
- 82 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 62.
- 83 The First Conference of Independent African States raised tepidly the question of armed struggle. However, when Nkrumah reconvened the Conference in Accra in December 1958, the delegates were unanimous in their support for the colonized to use all possible means to liberate themselves from colonial oppression. The Second Conference of the African People held in Tunis in January 1960, as well as the Conference of Independent African States in Addis Abba in June 1960, reaffirmed the resolution of the Accra Conference.
- 84 Frantz Fanon, 'Accra: Africa Affirms its Unity and Defines its Strategy', in *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 167.
- 85 Frantz Fanon, 'Algeria in Accra', in *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 161.
- 86 Fanon, 'Accra: Africa Affirms its Unity and Defines its Strategy', p. 166.
- 87 Fanon, 'Algeria in Accra', p. 161.
- 88 Cherki, *Frantz Fanon, Portrait*, p. 205.
- 89 Macey, *Frantz Fanon, A Life*, p. 371.

- 90 Macey, *Frantz Fanon, A Life*, p. 477.
- 91 Cherki, *Frantz Fanon, Portrait*, p. 213.
- 92 Cherki, *Frantz Fanon, Portrait*, p. 202.
- 93 J.-P. Sartre, 'Colonialism Is a System', in A. Haddour, S. Brewer and T. McWilliams (trans.), *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 47.
- 94 Sartre, 'Colonialism Is a System', p. 478.
- 95 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 27–28.
- 96 Frantz Fanon, 'National Independence: The Only Possible Outcome', in Jean Khalifa and Robert Young (eds) and Steven Corcoran (trans.), *Alienation and Freedom* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), p. 554.
- 97 Fanon, 'National Independence', p. 554.
- 98 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 28.
- 99 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 28.
- 100 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 28.
- 101 Geismar, *Fanon*, p. 185.