

Although Frantz Fanon's writings were intimately tied to colonial Algeria, his reflections have found resonance among a wide variety of audiences because of their theoretical and ideological value. Possibly, Fanon's limited proximity to Algerian culture and society contributed to the relevance of his writings elsewhere. This essay argues that, in spite of Fanon's involvement in the struggle for Algerian independence, his position in North Africa remained that of an outsider.

Frantz Fanon: Travelling Psychoanalysis and Colonial Algeria

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Oh, Frantz, the wretched of the earth again.

-Josie Fanon, 1988

The above exclamation was voiced by Frantz Fanon's widow during a phone conversation with her friend the

Algerian author Assia Djebar after she witnessed scenes of violence in the streets of Algiers in October 1988. It was reported in *Algerian White* and is cited by Homi Bhabha in "Framing Fanon," his foreword to the new English translation of *The Wretched of the Earth*. As he considers the relevance of studying Fanon's work today and reflects on the dynamics of decolonization and nationalistic struggle in "the era of globalization" and "our global century," Bhabha writes that "Fanon's best hopes for the Algerian revolution were taken hostage, and summarily executed, first by bureaucratized military rule [...], and then by the rise of fundamentalist groups like the Islamic Salvation Front" (x). Although Fanon's theories remain strongly tied to the

Algerian context, his reflections on the organization of colonial society beyond the particulars of a given case made his ideas resonate among wide audiences. According to Bhabha, "*The Wretched of the Earth*, well beyond the immediacies of its colonial context-the Algerian war of independence and the African continent-anticipates configurations of contemporary globalization" (xiii). Fanon's proleptical analysis and his imbedding of the Manichean nature of twentieth-century colonialisms in their larger historical context make his theories equally relevant to a range of other audiences, including decolonizing nations elsewhere, the Black Panthers, a Zimbabwean novelist, or-as Homi Bhabha believes-children working in factories in Third World countries and former World Bank senior vice president Joseph Stiglitz.¹ In this light, Josie Fanon's exclamation need not necessarily have been uttered in Algiers; it could have been induced by numerous situations in various locations, as the perspicacity of Fanon's observations contributed to the wide-ranging acceptance of his ideas internationally. In fact, if Fanon's theories are valid anywhere power is exerted, one could question the directness of their link to Algeria, as well as the extent to which Fanon was an outsider to that society and how much this exteriority contributed to the significance of his writings.

It is doubtful that the entire content of *The Wretched of the Earth* was of uniform interest to all its readers in different times and places. Participants in the black

struggle in the United States in the 1960s, for instance, turned to Fanon for a theoretical and ideological foundation to their movements, but many are unlikely to have found the passages on the mental disorders of French officers as exciting and relevant to their own situation as passages such as the conclusion, with its manifesto-like enthusiasm for the overthrow of European oppression. One should also credit the success of the book among such a wide readership in part to its preface by Jean Paul Sartre, as alluded to by Bhabha when he refers to Hannah Arendt and describes Sartre as fanning the flames (xxi).

A crucial element of Fanon's impact is certainly the symbolic value attached to his persona. Strikingly, in the eyes of his public, Fanon's own person is as important as his writings (if not more), which gives more weight to those writings' emblematic nature and their prophetic value than to their intellectual or even historical significance. Indeed, the numerous biographies of Frantz Fanon are a testament to the value attributed to his personal life.¹ Another, perhaps more obvious, example of Fanon's importance as a man is to be found in the work of the artist Mustapha Boutadjine, whose portraits of Fanon hang alongside those of other emblematic black figures such as Mohammed Ali, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Tommie Smith, and Angela Davis in his *Black is Toujours Beautiful* collection.¹ There even exists a documentary by the

filmmaker Isaac Julien, *Black Skin, White Mask*, which outlines Fanon's life by means of archival film footage, interviews with family and friends, and the representation of Fanon himself by actor Colin Salmon. While such a project might be sanctioned by the wide impact of his writings, the subject of the documentary is not Fanon's theories but the man himself. When his writings are mentioned, it is only in direct relation to his experiences as a student in France and as a psychiatrist in Algeria. As a result of the iconic value attributed to Fanon, his very identity emerges as the strength behind his ideas. Consequently, according to public perception, his involvement in the Algerian struggle for independence is associated with a natural connection imagined to exist between colonized non-white peoples. The assumption underlying such an association is that all non-white peoples unequivocally identify with one another, regardless of historical, racial, social, or cultural disparities that may exist between them.

Stuart Hall intervenes in Julien's documentary to point out that Fanon did not have significant insights regarding the place of religion in Algerian culture, and did not see the role it was going to play in the revolution. This remark can be substantiated by comments such as the one made in 2004 by veteran resistance leader Mohammed Harbi who, when asked in an interview for the documentary *Remembering History* about the dynamics of recruitment for the decolonization party, said, "In a certain sense, for the party, the rules of mobilization applied to a Muslim society faced by a non-Muslim authority. It wasn't openly stated, but it was implicit that these rules were what led the people to follow *them*." In this light, it is possible to consider Fanon's theories as significantly removed from the context in which they originate, and therefore operating on a macro level, which makes them translatable into praxis on various micro levels. Yet, this reading of Fanon's experience in Algeria ignores the fact that he did write extensively on the specificities of the Algerian people, including Islamic traditions. His approach to those issues, however, is marked by an exteriority to Algerian society that should not be overshadowed by his involvement in the struggle for independence.

Nevertheless, given that the administrative abuse of his native island of Martinique was not unique to the West Indian French colonies, it is understandable that, when in Algeria, Fanon sided with the natives in the resistance, or that he found his theories to be equally relevant there. His early schooling was marked by the French colonial approach to education, infamous for its assimilationist strategies. Colonized children were taught French history, civilization, and language as their own. The same assimilationist practices were the norm in education in all French colonies, including Algeria. This policy of assimilation in French colonialism, particularly when it came to education, was crucial in Martinique, since not only did it imply an identification with French values and manners, but it also developed a sense of contempt for African

civilizations among Martiniquans. Socialized from a French colonial perspective, non-white residents automatically adopted the French colonialist outlook on race, which associated blackness with savagery and backwardness, and thereby linked themselves to Europe rather than Africa. It is in reaction to this fundamental alienation that West Indian students such as Aime Cesaire, whose initial education experiences in Paris left them disillusioned, laid the foundations of the Negritude movement.

In Fanon's case, it is while he was in the army fighting for France during World War II that he first became conscious of his race. This consciousness grew while he studied medicine in the city of Lyon, and eventually became the basis of *Black Skin, White Masks*. His interests in racial psychology, therefore, started before he went to Algeria. By the time he completed his degree in psychiatry in 1953, Fanon was already considerably well versed in reflections on the dynamics of race and social structure. A crucial aspect of his thought is his insistence on the alienation of the black man when in juxtaposition with power in the hands of the white man. He draws a connection between the social, political, and economic inferiority of black people in the environments he is familiar with—namely the Caribbean and metropolitan France—and what he calls the "epidermalization" of this inferiority: the association of skin color with the black subject's understanding of his own inadequacy, which grounds these conjectures in the study of race as a *visible* marker of social difference (*Black* 11). Central to the Fanonian "epidermalization" of inferiority is the French systematization of assimilation that occurred more or less evenly across the colonies. Although similar discourses are arguably present to various extents everywhere two races or more are juxtaposed—as in non-French African colonies, or the United States—it is when this assimilation becomes systematically applied to every aspect of colonial rule, and especially education, that it yields the state of being on which Fanon reflects. His concern at this point is the problem of the coloured man in a white milieu. Imbedded in his analysis are both an awareness of most white people's systematic dismissal of black men's mental faculties and a will to situate his own reflections in the contemporary intellectual landscape, both of which led him to observe that "black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect" (*Black* 10).

Most importantly, Fanon's purpose was never to philosophize about the entire black race, although the editors responsible for the blurbs on the cover of the 1967 Grove Press edition of *Black Skin, White Masks* would like to suggest otherwise. The cover declares, "This book should be read by every black man with a desire to understand himself and the forces that conspire against him:" While Fanon never excludes anyone from a potential readership, he explicitly denies the validity of his analysis for all black individuals: "Many Negroes," he writes in the introduction to *Black Skin*,

White Masks, "will not find themselves in what follows. This is equally true of many whites" (12). He then concludes his introduction by writing, "Since I was born in the Antilles, my observations and my conclusions are valid only for the Antilles-at least concerning the black man *at home*. Another book could be dedicated to explaining the differences that separate the Negro of the Antilles from the Negro of Africa" (14). Fanon did undertake such a study. In "West Indians and Africans," an article he published three years after *Black Skin, White Masks* that is included in the 1964 collection of essays *Toward the African Revolution*, he is very critical of West Indians like Aime Cesaire, who vindicate their African roots:

Thus the West Indian, after 1945, changed his values. Whereas before 1939 he had his eyes riveted on white Europe, whereas what seemed good to him was escape from his color, in 1945 he discovered himself to be not only black but a negro, and it was in the direction of distant Africa that he was henceforth to put out his feelers.

[...]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:" (24-25)

As Robert Bernasconi notes, identifying Fanon as a detractor of the Negritude movement is "at best the result of an oversimplification of his rich and complex argument" (79). Nevertheless, Fanon clearly rejects the epistemological pairing of the West Indies with Africa and considers it as delusional a pairing as that of the West Indies with Europe. He ends "West Indians and Africans" by writing, "It thus seems that the West Indian, after the great white error, is now living in the great black mirage" (269).

Fanon had already arrived in Algeria when he emphasized the heterogeneity of blackness in "West Indians and Africans:" This gives a new dimension to his ending up in Africa-and in Algeria of all places-after he finished his medical studies in France, and calls for the investigation of his views on the North African. While legally the colonized Algerian is not considered the same as the European settler, the racial distinction between colonizers and colonized in North Africa is less clearly visible. In addition, unlike in other African colonies, in North Africa, resistance movements could typically rely on their members' ability to blend in among Europeans in order to carry out the struggle for national independence. In fact, one wonders whether a West Indian's appearance would have enabled him to easily carry arms across check points in the Casbah of Algiers without being arrested and searched by French authorities. This is particularly interesting if we consider that Fanon's primary interest in race

is in its function as a marker of difference *de visu*. The designated status of "colonized" is a sufficient premise for the perception of the North African through a racialized consciousness, and a political effort to unify the colonized beyond race is a reasonable concept when put in the global context of the struggles for independence and the waves of decolonization of the 1950s and '60s. *Ali* Stuart Hall points out in "New Ethnicities;" there is a "moment" in the black cultural politics of the second half of the twentieth century where "the term 'black' was coined as a way of referencing the common experience of racism and marginalization in Britain and came to provide the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, amongst groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities" (223). Similarly, Fanon shares the experience of French colonialism and oppression with North Africans, and his experiences as a colonized Antillais or a coloured student in Paris are not unique. This accounts for the appropriation of his theories elsewhere, as his Manichean opposition of White and Black certainly applies to the socio-economic structure of colonial Algeria, and his analysis of the Algerian struggle for independence is correspondingly relevant to other sites of colonial oppression. That analysis does not, however, necessarily hold beyond the national independence agenda. Accordingly, an examination of Fanon's position in Algeria (and the extent of his own "blending in") sheds light on the extent to which the shared experience of French colonial oppression levels ethnic particularities.

There was a very short period of transition between Fanon's graduation from medical school in 1953 and his departure for Algeria, but this is a period about which there has been extensive speculation. The most cited anecdote about this time is the unanswered letter Fanon wrote to then *depute* Leopold Senghor asking him for help obtaining a post in Senegal, a request that demonstrates Fanon's interest in working in Africa. What is most interesting, however, is Fanon's disinterest in returning to Martinique or staying in Europe. Although he accepted a position in the hospital of Pontorson in northwestern France, he was never satisfied with it. *Ali* Patrick Ehlen notes,

At Pontorson there were certainly sick patients to tend to, but they were not the types of patients Fanon could really feel enthusiastic about. The whole situation had a congenial bourgeois quality to it that turned his stomach. There were no battles to fight, and no authorities to challenge. After several months of excruciating ennui, he told his brother Joby about his dissatisfaction with the job. "I do not want to stay here;" he confessed. "In France there are enough psychiatrists to cure all the patients in France. I want to go to Africa....I want to go to a country under domination to cure the *sick*;" (114)

Although it is virtually impossible-and arguably pointless-to do anything more than speculate on the reasons that led Fanon not to be content with going back

to Martinique or staying in France, he was clearly growing more interested in the dynamics of ."domination" beyond considerations of blackness and whiteness. Therefore, he left Pontorson as soon as he could and took the first available job he found appealing, which happened to be a position in the psychiatric hospital at Blida-Joinville in the vicinity of Algiers in 1953. The Algerian society of the 1950s provided more fertile ground than metropolitan France for the development of Fanon's theories on racism, since it gave him the opportunity to work with both colonizing and colonized mental patients who were directly in contact with one another.

It is important to remember that when Fanon went to Algeria, that country was fully incorporated into France as a colony of settlement. The Algerian opposition to French colonialism at that time was coming to maturity. The 1954 proclamation of the political party of independence, the *Front de Liberation Nationale* (FLN) called for armed struggle against the occupation and marked the beginnings of the final stage of the resistance that would eventually lead to national independence in 1962. The fact that Algeria was French territory rather than a simple colony, however, puts into perspective Fanon's departure for Africa, as in a sense he was simply leaving Pontorson to go elsewhere in France.

It is in this setting that Fanon was an active psychiatrist, treating Europeans and Algerians who suffered from mental conditions linked to a colonial situation marked by racism, violence, and segregation. In 1957, he resigned from his position and left Algeria. As Emmanuel Hansen points out, "Fanon had[...]] come to the view that in a colonial territory like Algeria, characterized by economic oppression, political violence, racism, torture, murder, and inhuman degradation, the psychiatric disorders from which the people suffered were the direct result of the social situation; it was, therefore, futile to treat a patient and send him back to the same environment. What had to be changed was not the people but the social and political conditions prevailing in Algeria" (72).

It is conceivable that Fanon had no choice but to side with the FLN because the structure of Algerian society under colonial rule was another expression of the racism that he had experienced in the army and during his education in France. If this was the case, it becomes tempting to think that he identified with the Algerians because he had come to be aware that he was racially marked himself, and that his status of "native" meant his inevitable rejection by the French. However, this shift from *sided with* to *identified with* is premised on the questionable Eurocentric vision whereby all non-white people naturally sympathize with one another on the basis of their race. In this case, the assumption is problematic for at least two reasons: first, Fanon's skin colour and religion potentially subjected him to as much racism among Algerians as among Europeans, and second, he came to Algeria as part of a French administrative system.

Indeed, in discussions of Fanon's work, the racial complexities of North Africa are sometimes oversimplified, and the situation in Algeria is mistakenly imagined simply as one in which black people were colonized by white people. Diana Fuss, for instance, in her examination of Fanon's work at the psychiatric hospital at Blida-Joinville, writes that "over half of Fanon's patients were white Europeans, the rest black Algerians" (36). Moreover, as pointed out by Alice Cherki regarding Fanon's arrival in Algeria, "As any other psychiatrist in the service of France, Fanon's first point of entry was the European community" (54).

Viewing Fanon's political position regarding Algeria as solely racial would be equivalent to ignoring the many white French citizens who fought alongside the FLN for the liberation of Algeria—one example of whom would be Henri Alleg, author of the prominent book *La Question*, which denounced the institutionalized practice of torture by the colonizers. This view also ignores the many who were speaking for the decolonization of Algeria in Europe, most notably Jean Paul Sartre, who wrote prefaces to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Alleg's *La Question*, and Tunisian Albert Memmi's *Portrait du colonisé. Portrait du colonisateur*. Whereas the position of someone like Sartre is not ambiguous—his race and his unquestioned French origins make him simply a Frenchman who happens to be for the Algerian liberation—Fanon's position is less definite. Because he is black, his motivations were automatically deemed to be racially based, especially given the topic of his prior writings.

However, this perspective disregards the ambiguous nature of the North African race. For Fanon, at least, it is evident that his reflections on race while he was in France did not apply to North Africans. For instance, in the article "The 'North African Syndrome,'" first published in 1952 and later included in *Toward the African Revolution*, Fanon addresses his colleagues on issues relating to diagnosing North African patients in France. Fanon clearly approaches the question not only as a doctor but, more specifically, as a French doctor, thereby doubly dissociating himself from his North African patients.' Thus, his examination stands in sharp contrast with those of North African scholars who can claim to belong to the community they study, such as Abdelmalek Sayad's *La double absence*, or Tahar Ben Jelloun's *La plus haute des solitudes*, in which he analyzes the sexuality of immigrant North African workers in France in the 1970s.

The exteriority of Fanon to Algerian culture is evident from the moment he arrived in Algeria. He is notorious for the changes he brought to the Blida-Joinville Hospital, and most notably for replacing the systematic seclusion of patients with a model that recreated elements of the outside community inside the hospital. He quickly noticed that while the condition of European patients tended to improve under this new model, the native Algerian patients stagnated. Fanon realized this was partly due to the nature

of the methods applied to the patients. Fanon's investigations in matters relating to the treatment of Algerian patients resulted in numerous articles, namely "The Attitude of the Maghrebian Muslim Towards Madness;" written in collaboration with Dr. Sanchez; and "Sociotherapy in a Ward for Muslim Men;" written in collaboration with Dr. Azoulay. This aspect of Fanon's career has been given considerable attention in various biographies, notably that by Patrick Ehlen. However, it is Jock McCulloch's analysis that sheds the most light on Fanon's position vis-a-vis the North African.

McCulloch's examination of the article "The Attitude of the Maghrebian Muslim Towards Madness" reveals Fanon's approach to curing the sick in a country under domination. Fanon and Sanchez begin by finding the European psychiatric approach to insanity in Islamic societies problematic. The Muslim attitude towards madness is based on the belief that the mentally ill person is possessed by evil forces and therefore does not need to be punished, which often leads European doctors to believe that Muslims in fact revere the insane. As McCulloch observes, "In terms of Practice, the aim of Fanon and Sanchez's investigation is to facilitate the replacement of traditional methods with modern European techniques. This could only be achieved with a full understanding of the native community's attitudes and values towards their ill" (103). Fanon keenly recognizes that the position of the European doctor is marked by an ethnocentrism that renders the native communities' behaviours unintelligible. While because of his race Fanon's own position was clearly not marked by the same ethnocentrism, it does not necessarily follow that he is ethnically closer to the Algerian than to the European, but merely indicates his will and ability to take into account the particulars of his patients' socio-cultural location.

"Sociotherapy in a Ward for Muslim Men;" the article co-written with Dr. Azoulay, reveals Fanon's understanding of his position as a psychiatrist curing colonized patients in a colonizer's hospital. The article is the result of Fanon's experimentation with the occupational therapy method he had learned under the supervision of Dr. Tosquelles at the Saint-Alban Hospital while he was a student. Occupational therapy (also called sociotherapy) is based on the creation of situations inside the mental asylum in which the patients can interact as they would on the outside. At Blida-Joinville, the occupational therapy consisted mainly in the institution of a hospital newspaper, the establishment of a small cafe, the organization of musical evenings and film shows, and the encouragement of such manual activities as knitting and embroidery. However, whereas this proved a success among European patients, it had little effect on Algerians. As McCulloch puts it, "The methods of Tosquelles had been derived from psychiatric practice in metropolitan France, and therein presupposed a set of sociocultural circumstances very different from those found in North Africa. [...]

This transposition of European expectations and methods was based upon an implicit denial of any cultural differences between North Africa and the metropole. More precisely, it assumed the absence of any semblance of originality among the Muslim population" (111).

Evidently, Fanon could not have had an innate understanding of the colonized Algerians. However, his education did give him an understanding of the French colonizer's mentality, especially the perception of the colonized individual's difference as mere inferiority. The same colonialist strategies that were applied in Martinique, and that Fanon knew and understood well, were in effect in Algeria. Thus, Fanon's experiences as a black individual paradoxically gave **him** more insight into the therapy methods of a French establishment than into the condition of the native. This led various critics to argue that Fanon had made the same ethnocentric mistakes for which he had criticized other psychoanalysts, such as Octave Mannoni, to whom he dedicated the fourth chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*. McCulloch, for example, argues that "Fanon had fallen prey to the same ethnocentric blindness which he had found so reprehensible in Mannoni's work on the Malagasy" (112).

However, it is not *the same* ethnocentrism, for Fanon's experiences as a black man in white circles had made him aware that the difference in progress between French and Algerian patients is due to their socio-cultural differences, not to any racial superiority of the one over the other. This led Fanon and Azoulay not to change their approach, but rather to adapt the principles of occupational therapy to the needs of the Algerian patients. Their innovations were based on a consideration of the specificities of the local society. For instance, an exclusively male cafe was created in order to accommodate the traditional separation of genders in North African cafes. Another significant innovation consisted in celebrating local festivals and Islamic holidays instead of Christian ones. As Nigel Gibson puts it, "Fanon's appreciation of his failed psychological experiment indicates how quickly he was willing to change approaches. [. . .) If Fanon had paid little attention to the many-faceted Algerian culture on his arrival at Blida, he quickly changed his mind. Such empathy with the lived experience of his Algerian patients at Blida would lead him to identify with the Algerian war of liberation" (88-89). Although the direct link that Gibson draws between Fanon's experimentation with occupational therapy and his *identification* with the Algerian struggle for independence seems a bit of a stretch, his approach to the Algerian situation as a psychiatrist interested in oppression and nervous conditions under an assimilationist colonial rule did give him some insights into the fundamental mechanisms of North African societies.

Yet, in spite of his laborious acquisition of knowledge on Algerian mores, Fanon's exteriority to the Algerian people is particularly underscored by the fact that he neither spoke Arabic (although he did attempt to learn it) nor was a Muslim. As Albert Memmi points out, religion, although perhaps not so important to Fanon, was (and still is) extremely important to Algeria, not only from a social and cultural perspective, but also from a nationalist standpoint, since Islam is incorporated in the Algerian constitution. More importantly, Memmi notes that Fanon's linguistic limitations constituted a serious handicap to his psychiatric work, as he was forced to depend on an interpreter when dealing with patients who did not necessarily speak French ("Impossible" 27-28). As a result, as John Mowitt has argued, Fanon's nationalism sometimes resulted in theories that bypassed the particularities of the Algerian individual (169). In the preface to *A Dying Colonialism*, for instance, Fanon writes: "The Algerian Nation is no longer in a future heaven. It is no longer the product of hazy and phantasy-ridden imaginations. It is at the very center of the new Algerian man" (30).⁵

Fanon's thoughts on Algeria are situated on a theoretical level, marked by prior agendas and by his own interest in racial psychology. One example of the distance that separates him from Algerian society can be found in his treatment of religion. His writings on Islam are limited to women's veils because, like race in *Black Skin, White Masks*, it is a visible marker of difference. As he writes in *A Dying Colonialism*, "In the Arab world, for example, the veil worn by women is at once noticed by the tourist. One may remain for a long time unaware of the fact that a Moslem does not eat pork, or that he denies himself daily sexual relations during the month of Ramadan, but the veil worn by the women appears with such constancy that it generally suffices to characterize Arab society" (35). Although by reading Fanon the uninitiated reader would learn many details about Algerian society, those are incidental to Fanon. His analysis sheds more light on the importance of the veil for the European than for the Muslim. He is not the absolute insider who should be trusted by virtue of unquestioned first-hand experience. Fanon is interested in the similarities between the condition of the colonized subject under white domination, not the ways in which being black and being Algerian could be identical. In this case, the visible nature of the woman's veil makes it a visible marker of inferiority, functioning in the same way that skin colour does. However, although Fanon's analysis of the veil takes place five years after his first attempts to know Algerian society better, it still originates from a standpoint marked by exteriority.

The veil is only the visible expression of the inaccessible nature of Arab and Muslim women's space, which has been the leitmotif and defining aspect of French rhetoric on Islamic societies at least since the eighteenth century.⁶ Ignoring local specificities, the

French imagined the North African woman on the basis of Orientalist stereotypes. *AB* Fadwa El Guindi demonstrates in *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance*, the veil that the woman on the street wears is simply the extension of the harem walls, and similarly functions as an obstacle for the colonizer's gaze. For Fanon, unveiling the woman, or penetrating her closed space, is an expression of the success of colonization. More specifically, the extent of the colonizer's access to the native woman is an index of the failure of the colonized subject's resistance.' "Algerian woman unveiled announced to the occupier an Algerian society whose systems of defence were in the process of dislocation, open and breached" (*Dying* 42). Fanon's theory is based on a colonial understanding of privacy as the intrinsic character and epistemological foundation of the Arab woman.

Fanon's view of the role of the veil in the relations between colonizer and colonized in Algeria makes clear the importance to the French colonial authority of access to the colonized woman as a validation of power. He describes the function of colonial authority when the European manager formally invites the Algerian employee to come, and to bring his wife, to a social gathering in connection with the company. The Algerian is then cornered into either accepting defeat and humiliation and coming with his wife, or running the risk of losing his job if he confronts his superior. For Fanon, this situation "bring[s] out the sadistic and perverse character of these contacts and relationships and [...] show[s] in microcosm the tragedy of the colonial situation on the psychological level, the way the two systems directly confront each other" (*Dying* 40).

Thus, Fanon never situates himself within the colonized community, but merely describes the ways in which access to native women and their private space becomes a symbol of colonial supremacy. However, arguably his own condition and background hold significant similarities to the conditions he analyzes. One important location for the systematic attempts at unveiling the Algerian woman is the school. Indeed, French colonialism applied the same assimilationist practices in education throughout their colonies. Fanon points out that "the teachers to whom the parents have entrusted their children soon acquire the habit of passing severe judgment on the fate of woman in Algerian society" (*Dying* 39). This is still relevant today, to the recent debate on the wearing of veils in French schools, to the mass-media portrayal of Afghan women voting in their burkas under the supervision of American soldiers, and to the various feminist schools whose rhetoric is articulated around the Third World woman's plight in patriarchal society.

Fanon's personal experience as a black Martiniquan may be similar to that of many colonized Algerians, but it does not annul ethnic differences. His theories on Algeria did not travel; rather, it is his theories on the Caribbean that sojourned in

Algeria. Still, as Edward Said puts forward in "Traveling Theory Reconsidered," it is conceivably Lukacs's theories that travelled to Algeria through Fanon's vision; or perhaps, as Mohammed Harbi suggests in his postscript to the 2002 edition of *Les damnés de la terre*, Fanon appropriated Marx in his appreciation of the Algerian situation. In any case, Fanon's Algerian experience was shaped by prior agendas, and his position in the struggle for independence remained that of an outsider, in spite of a colonial process whereby a discourse of sameness is imposed on all colonized people, and in spite of the appropriation of this discourse of uniformity as a language of unity to serve rhetorics of decolonization. Ultimately, Fanon's ideas only retain their reputation through their applications elsewhere. Besides their applicability as an ideological framework for theory and praxis in various contexts, his writings' very aptitude to remarkably stand the test of time and place forces us to reconsider our understanding of the ties that bind colonized peoples not only politically and historically, but also psychologically and culturally.

NOTES

1/ Homi Bhabha mentions Joseph Stiglitz in an alternative version of his foreword to the new translation of *The Wretched of the Earth*, entitled "Is Frantz Fanon Still Relevant?" and published in *The Chronicle Review* of March 2005.

2/ For this reason, some aspects of Fanon's life can be considered common knowledge. However, the biographical elements used in this paper are a synthesis of the works on Fanon's life by David Macey, Nigel Gibson, and Patrick Ehlen.

3/ For an example of Mustapha Boutadjine's work, see "Art: Black is Toujours Beautiful" in *Wasafiri's* Spring 2005 issue, dedicated to Frantz Fanon, or Boutadjine's webpage at: <<http://www.mustaphaboutadjine.com/>>. It is noteworthy that Boutadjine's portrait of Frantz Fanon is not part of the same collection as those of other figures of the Algerian struggle for independence, such as Abane Ramdane and Ali la Pointe.

4/ Fanon also considers "Arabs" and "Negros" as two different categories of patients when he criticizes racist practices among French doctors in the first chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*.

5/ The erasure of Algeria in the translation of this book's title from *L'An V de la Revolution Algerienne* to *A Dying Colonialism* further illustrates the attempt to remove Fanon's theories from their Algerian circumstances to facilitate a universal discourse of decolonization. In "Fanon's al-Jaza'ir, or Algeria translated" (*Parallax* 8.2 [2002]: 99-115), Brian Edwards points out how this is symptomatic of a will to "detach the work from its specifically Algerian context and from its temporal specificity" (103), and makes it a point to refer to Fanon's work as "*Year Five of the Algerian Revolution*" throughout his article.

6/ Montesquieu in particular (especially in *The Persian Letters* and *The Spirit of the Laws*) wrote extensively on Oriental women, harems, and "Domestic Slavery."

7/ Malek Alloula's work on colonial postcards in *Le Harem colonial (The Colonial Harem*. Trans. Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995) illustrates this point: faced with the inaccessibility of the Algerian woman and the ocular obstruction of veils and harem walls that challenge colonial authority, French photographers used props and scenery and paid models to create fake interior scenes in the studio

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