From Fanon to Glissant: A Martinican Genealogy

Carine Mardorossian

Small Axe, Number 30 (Volume 13, Number 3), November 2009, pp. 12-24 (Article)

Published by Duke University Press

From Fanon to Glissant: A Martinican Genealogy

Carine Mardorossian

The Martinican philosopher, psychiatrist, and social revolutionary Frantz Fanon is considered one of the pioneering figures of postcolonial studies. His books *Peau noire, masques blancs* and *Les damnés de la terre* are two of the most widely cited works in the field and were translated into English in the decade following his death. Today, eminent postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Ella Shohat continue to cite and discuss him. As an icon of postcolonialism, an increasingly institutionalized field, Fanon has thus come to be associated with what is primarily an anglophone critical enterprise and area of study. The resulting "anglicization" of this important francophone figure overlooks, I argue, the ways in which Fanon's Martinican and francophone background is integral to his intellectual and political contributions and to his influence on later generations of writers and political figures. Most notably, I will show the ways in which his legacy can be traced in the work of the contemporary Caribbean philosopher and poet Edouard Glissant, whose brand of transnationalism in *Le discours antillais* develops the ramifications of Fanon's thought in a way that has been obscured by anglophone criticism. This lacuna, I argue, is partly due to the unavailability of an unabridged translation in English of Glissant's *Discours* as well as to the failure of Fanonian critics to account for his grounding in a specifically francophone Caribbean setting and culture.[1]

1 Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952; Paris: Seuil, 1995); translated into English by Charles Lam Markmann as *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove, 1967). Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: Maspero, 1961); translated into English by Constance Farrington as *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1963). Edouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais* (1981; Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

small axe 30 • November 2009 • DOI 10.1215/07990537-2009-023

Frantz Fanon died prematurely in 1961, at age thirty-six. Almost fifty years after his death, his writings continue to be widely anthologized, a fact which should not surprise, since Fanon is indeed consistently cited as one of the "founding fathers" of postcolonial theory.[2] His writings radically challenged conventional approaches to the key concepts of race and nationalism in postcolonialism and are claimed to have inspired anticolonial liberation movements across the world.[3] What *is* surprising, however, is the kind of anthologies in which his most influential essays have appeared in recent years. Far from being a historical figure who is only recognized, as Nigel Gibson claims, as a "relic from a previous age rather than a living thinker, revered and important but somewhat naïve,"[4] Fanon has appeared in contemporary anthologies, ranging from *Postmodernism* (2002) to *The Masculinity Studies Reader* (2002), alongside established and emerging contemporary scholars.[5] His essay "The Fact of Blackness" is reprinted, for instance, in David Theo Goldberg's *Anatomy of Racism*, with contributions from influential contemporary critics such as Paul Gilroy, Julia Kristeva, Anthony Appiah, Sander Gilman, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, and Etienne Balibar, while "The Negro and Psychopathology" appears in *Identity: A Reader*, alongside essays by Pierre Bourdieu, Kaja Silverman, Jacques Lacan, Christopher Lasch, Michel Foucault, Jacqueline Rose, Stuart Hall, Julia Kristeva, and Homi Bhabha.[6] That forty-eight years after his death Fanon would be in conversation with this caliber of contemporary high theorists and philosophers rather than be the object of their analysis is testimony to his continued relevance as a thinker of race and nationalism. Fanon is no mere "artifact of the 1950s and 1960s . . . , simply a historical personage"[7] but persists as an indispensable contributor and interlocutor in fields as varied as postcolonial theory, anticolonialism, postmodernism, and psychoanalysis.

Nevertheless, while Fanon continues to speak and matter to contemporary scholarly fields, the lack of discussion of his work across fields is striking. Fanon's contributions to studies of race, sexuality, national identity, and psychoanalysis are typically discussed in parallel universes if not at cross purposes: *Peau noire, masques blancs* is cited by psychoanalysts, *Les damnés de la terre* by third world theorists, and as such, his political writings on colonization and violence are consistently analyzed outside the context of his work on the psyche and vice

2 Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick, *Cultural Theory: The Key Thinkers* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 69; Nigel C. Gibson, "Is Fanon Relevant? Toward an Alternative Foreword to 'The Damned of the Earth,'" *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 5 (Summer 2007): 36; Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 161.

3 See Gibson, "Is Fanon Relevant?" Gibson questions the scope of Fanon's impact on anticolonialism because the idea that his writings "served leaders of emerging nations as a veritable handbook of revolutionary practice and social organization" (36) was foregrounded as much by the blurb on the back of book as by actual historical developments.

4 Ibid.

5 Hans Bertens and Joseph Natoli, eds., *Postmodernism* (London: Blackwell, 2002); Rachel Adams and David Savran, eds., *The Masculinity Studies Reader* (London: Blackwell, 2002).

6 David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Anatomy of Racism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990); Paul du Gay, Jessica Evans, and Peter Redman, eds., *Identity: A Reader* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 2001). In Adams and Savran, *Masculinity Studies Reader*, Fanon's "The Fact of Blackness" is published alongside essays by Kobena Mercer, Robyn Wiegman, Kaja Silverman, Judith Halberstam, Daniel Boyarin, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Richard Dyer. It also appears alongside writing by scholars such as Avtar Brah, Paul Gilroy, Gauri Viswanathan, Sander L. Gilman, and Philip Cohen in James Donald and Ali Rattansi, eds., "*Race," Culture, and Difference* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992).

7 Gibson, "Is Fanon Relevant?" 36.

versa.[8] Homi Bhabha's much cited essay on Fanon is a case in point, since, in recasting Fanon as, in David Macey's words, a "black Lacan in the making," Bhabha does not account for the fact that the absence of a "master narrative" in *Peau noire, masques blancs* does not define Fanon's later work, namely, *Les damnés de la terre* and *L'an cinq de la révolution algérienne*.[9] Similarly, it is remarkable how little attention postcolonialists have been paying to the impact of Fanon's Martinican and francophone background on his work and conversely of his work on francophone thinkers and thinkers such as Edouard Glissant, who have in turn become icons of postcolonial studies today.[10]

In his impressive biography of Fanon, David Macey highlights the implication of the selective compartmentalization to which Fanon's life and work have thus been subjected: "The recent crop of books and articles—and one film— . . . construct a Fanon who exists outside time and space and in a purely textual dimension."[11] Macey points out that "the eradication of the specifically French and Martinican dimension of Fanon's colonial experience" may also be responsible for the lack of discussion surrounding the egregious mistranslation of some of his writings.[12] For instance, Fanon's chapter title "L'expérience vécue du noir" ("The Lived Experience of the Black Man") in *Peau noire, masques blancs* was, remarkably, originally translated as "The Fact of Blackness." Although Fanon's whole work is a challenge to the notion of race as a transhistorical "fact," the English title is hardly ever discussed in terms of a (mis)translation. As Macey states, this may be partly due to Fanon's assimilation into postcolonial studies, an academic field that—after all—emerged in English departments and has remained resolutely anglophone for most of its history.[13] As a result, the fact that Fanon did not write in the language in which he is read in the United States is conveniently set aside as insignificant to the transmission of his ideas. By contrast, Macey helpfully outlines the ways in which Fanon's Martinican background is crucial to an understanding of his work. The biography reveals, for instance, how a knowledge of the tripartite racial and social hierarchy that defines the Caribbean is crucial to elucidate the analysis of race in *Peau noire, masques blancs*. What I propose to do here is extend Macey's insight into a consideration of the ways in which Fanon's contributions to race and colonial discourse analysis are part of a Martinican intellectual and political genealogy that links Frantz Fanon to his compatriot Edouard Glissant.

8 David Marriott's and Alice Cherki's respective studies of Fanon constitute exceptions to this rule, since they both discuss Fanon's work on the psyche as directly relevant to his work on decolonization. Cherki, who worked under Fanon at Blida-Joinville hospital during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–62), is particularly incisive when it comes to the imbrication of Fanon's clinical and political contributions. See David Marriott, "Black Cultural Studies," *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory* 16, no. 1 (2008): 276–87; and Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

9 David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* (New York: Picador, 2000), 28; Homi Bhabha, "Interrogating Identity: Frantz Fanon and the Postcolonial Prerogative," in *The Location of Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), 61; Frantz Fanon, *L'an cinq de la révolution algérienne* (Paris: Maspero, 1959).

10 This is ironic, of course, because Martinique, which became an overseas department of France in 1946, never underwent decolonization to become "postcolonial."

11 Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography*, 27.

12 Ibid., 29.

13 Ibid., 26.

It may seem counterintuitive to trace the legacies of the pioneering theorist of nationalism and national liberation in the third world by examining Edouard Glissant, the contemporary icon of a creolized postnationalism. Indeed, some of Fanon's most important contributions to postcolonial studies include his exhortation to fight for national liberation as well as his description of the stages that characterize the history of the emergence of a national consciousness. For Fanon, there could be no culture without the development of a national consciousness. Consequently, he saw as inherently flawed the continentwide approach of the Pan-Africanists of his time and their promotion of a transnational "black culture" that failed to account for the nation and national liberation as a precondition for culture.[14] Glissant, in contrast, argues for a model of cross-cultural identity that locates Caribbean culture in the regional context of the Americas rather than in individual Caribbean nations. His emphasis on "Relation" highlights the interconnectedness of the dynamics of creolization in the Americas, that is, of the transnational and cross-cultural processes of intermixing and transformation that produce creole societies.

Nevertheless, despite these different foci, and academia's predilection for epistemic breaks rather than the recognition of continuity, the two men have more in common than may first meet the eye. They are both contemporaries and compatriots, and they both would go on to challenge Negritude's celebration of "black culture," albeit from different perspectives. They met three times over the course of Fanon's lifetime,[15] encounters that prompted Glissant to refer to Fanon as an *écorché vif* (a tortured soul) but also as the only "francophone Antillean intellectual who really matched action to words by espousing the Algerian cause."[16] Glissant's measured admiration (measured insofar as *écorché* may imply an oversensitivity from which Glissant may have been distancing himself) led to remarkable points of intersection between his and Fanon's analyses of Caribbean culture. Although Glissant's poetics ultimately deviated from Fanon's ethical and political formulations, we can see an important inheritance from Fanon in Glissant's political and poetical project, one that can only be fully accounted for in the context of a discussion of their shared Martinican provenance.

The Caribbean region provides a unique perspective into the interconnected cultural dynamics of creolization because it reflects a history of social struggles—divided among native-born whites, foreign whites, free and enslaved blacks, free and enslaved mulattos—that has always resisted binaries. As a result of the history of slavery as well as of the major ethnocultural and migratory displacements that followed emancipation, creolization in the Caribbean

14 Macey reports how Fanon's presence at the Présence Africaine's Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Rome in 1959 "struck a rather discordant note" (*Frantz Fanon: A Biography*, 374) precisely because of his investment in a concept of the nation that challenged the Pan-Africanist ethos of the other participants. Ironically, this did not stop some of Fanon's readers from claiming him as an icon of "black nationalism" (ibid., 24).

15 Fanon and Glissant met once in Paris in 1946, then in Paris again at the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in 1956, and finally in Rome in 1961, four months before Fanon's death.

16 Glissant, *Le discours antillais*, 56. This statement may be a symptom of Glissant's modesty, since, as J. Michael Dash reveals, in the 1950s he too was involved in political concerns, founding the Front-Antillo-Guyanais and calling for the decolonization of the French overseas departments and their integration into the Caribbean regions. See J. Michael Dash, *Edouard Glissant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 13.

occurred and continues to occur in a compacted and accelerated way. As Glissant states, the Caribbean "may be held up as one of the places in the world where Relation presents itself most visibly, one of the explosive regions where it seems of be gathering strength."[17] At the same time, this hybrid condition, or Relation, is also increasingly "making itself visible everywhere," so that the rest of the world has much to learn from the condensed "workshop" that the Caribbean archipelago is, where the processes of interracial, linguistic, and cross-cultural interaction and exchange are eminently visible and researchable.[18]

Divided as it has been historically between *békés* (whites), mulattos, and blacks (Aimé Césaire's "békaille, mulâtraille, and négraille" in *Cahier*),[19] Martinique in particular provides a unique background for the undoing of traditional and retrograde views of race. This tripartite racial structure is overlaid with a class conflict that forcefully illustrates the intertwined racial and class hierarchies of Caribbean societies. In contemporary Martinique, the top positions in society and public service are still predominantly held by whites, and social relations between the various categories of the population remain a rarity. As Macey points out, "'shadism,' [or] complex distinctions made on the basis of degrees of pigmentation are still commonplace."[20] In the face of increasingly destabilized social hierarchies, the békés in particular remain anxious about the (re)production of the supposed purity of their bloodline and about the maintenance of categorical differences between the races. In this context of white supremacist ideals, dark-skinned Martinicans are not impervious to the desire to whiten, or as Fanon puts it in *Peau noire*, to "lactify," their race.[21]

This racial and social complexity provides the backdrop against which Fanon began the interrogation of racial identity that would eventually lead to the explosion of identitarian thought from the proponents of creolization and créolité.[22] Indeed, Fanon's pioneering contribution to discussions of race was to introduce the idea of the cultural nature of race and racial identification. He radically challenged the most deep-seated assumptions about the concept by questioning the "recurrent and . . . violent equation between the idea of 'race' and the 'black body'" and by discussing the "black" body not as the origin of racism but as its symptom.[23] As Robyn Wiegman points out, race is "rendered 'real' (and therefore justifiable) through the naturalizing discourses of the body, those discourses that locate difference in a pre-cultural realm where corporeal significations supposedly speak a truth which the body

17 Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 33; originally published as *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

18 Raphaël Confiant, *Aimé Césaire: Une traversée paradoxale du siècle* (Paris: Stock, 1993), 266. It is because the region can be said to function as the exemplar of the new global order that Caribbean studies occupies such a representative status in postcolonial studies today and that Glissant has become such an iconic figure in the field.

19 Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* [*Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*], in *The Collected Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 32–86.

20 Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography*, 46.

21 Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 38.

22 See Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989). Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant see themselves as disciples of Glissant and similarly promote a cross-cultural poetics of liberation that celebrates hybridity and "the conscious harmonization of preserved diversities" (114) as the basis of Caribbean identity.

23 Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 21.

inherently means."[24] Ever since the nineteenth-century pseudosciences of anatomy and craniometry circumscribed its meanings, race has been understood as what can be read off bodily features such as skin color, nose size, eyes, breast or penis size, and so on. In what is ultimately a legacy of such racist discourses, we still tend to "visualize" race as a "natural" identity because it is a naturalized site of difference. That "blackness" is not a pregiven identity but a crucial aspect of the workings of cultural narratives is *not* self-evident precisely because we have been conditioned to think of race as a stable, coherent, and "visible" identity.

For Fanon, "the fact of blackness" lies not in the body but in the cultural disciplining that teaches us what to see. His recasting of race powerfully exposes the very processes through which racially marked subjects get fixed within visibility or excluded from it. Thus, as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* so powerfully stages, while racial difference is "visible" it does not preclude one from being "invisible," a paradox that further exemplifies the kind of questioning of the "regimes of corporeal visibility" that emerges from Fanon's reworking of race.[25] Indeed, the visual and the visible are different economies whose conflation is part and parcel of the workings of these "regimes of visibility." Just as the visual does not necessarily lead to visibility, neither does the visible necessarily require the visual to establish difference. As Fanon's insights make clear, "below the corporeal schema" is a "historical-racial schema,"[26] a racial *narrative* through which we come to understand and interact with our world.

Fanon's recasting of the notion of race distinguishes itself from other forms of post-essentialist analyses in that it takes place, as it were, on top of a familiar essentialist scenario that anchors race in bodily characteristics. His emphasis on the physicalist aspects of race (skin, size of the penis, hair) shows that he is not merely questioning race at the level of its metaphoricity but actually exposing the "epistemology of visibility"[27] in which our understanding of race is anchored. Our facile critical reliance on referential and metaphorical meanings of *race* are thus challenged in favor of a model that sees them as part of the same racial logic. Race is no longer a backdrop of visible and invariable difference on which social meanings are imposed but is itself a site of visible transformation.

In *Peau noire, masques blancs*, for instance, Fanon emphasizes how "le Noir Antillais sera d'autant plus blanc, c'est-à-dire se rapprochera d'autant plus du véritable homme, qu'il aura fait sienne la langue française. . . . Le colonisé se sera d'autant plus échappé de sa brousse qu'il aura fait siennes les valeurs culturelles de la métropole. Il sera d'autant plus blanc qu'il aura rejeté sa noirceur, sa brousse."[28] In other words, the black Caribbean will "whiten" himself by mastering the French language. Here, Fanon illustrates how racial difference is

24 Ibid., 4.
25 Ibid.
26 Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 90.
27 Wiegman, *American Anatomies*, 4.
28 "The black Antillean will become whiter, that is, he will come closer to being a real human being, in direct proportion to his mastery of the French language. . . . The colonized will stop being a savage in direct proportion to his adoption of the cultural values of the metropole. He will be all the whiter for rejecting his blackness, his jungle." Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 14.

produced not through its anchoring in "natural" difference but through its association with various tropes such as linguistic incompetence, dirt, and animality/savagery (the opposite of "véritable homme"; "le nègre est une bête").[29] His emphasis is on mastering French as a means of changing an identity that is supposedly fixed within visibility highlights, then, how social categories such as race gain meaning through their association with other (arbitrary) categories of meaning rather than with "real" or "natural" differences. His was a crucial intervention for future Caribbean and postcolonial thought insofar as it dislodged race from its plinth of fixity and made it available—as a relational paradigm—for the modalities of hybridity, liminality, métissage, creolization, and mestizo consciousness that have come to dominate postcolonial studies in recent years. It is also the kind of intervention that could only have been made by someone who was brought up in a family that identified with a dominant "white" culture in Martinique and who was jolted into "blackness" by racist interpellations upon arrival in France, the "mother country."[30] One of the most cited passages from Fanon is indeed the primal scene in which a white child points at him and cries out, "Tiens, un nègre! . . . Maman, regarde le nègre, j'ai peur!"[31] The process of racialization he personally underwent was a powerful illustration and confirmation of the contingency of racial identity as a complex of social meanings that expose the symbolic nature of race and challenge the concept's yoking to the body. Race, too, in other words, is a product of language.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that for Fanon the constructedness and contingency of race makes its effects any less pernicious. In fact, one of the most important contributions of Fanon's sociodiagnostic of race in *Peau noire, masques blancs* is the study of the lingering effects of colonial racism on the "subjective experience of the black man" (the infamous "l'expérience vécue du noir" that was mistranslated as "the fact of blackness"). Fanon is in fact the first colonized intellectual to have examined these effects in ways that account for the unconscious without falling prey to a victim-blaming rhetoric. This is also the aspect of his thought that has left its strongest mark on thinkers such as Glissant, whose "pulsion mimétique"[32]—which has been translated as "mimetic drive"[33]—is both indebted to and extends Fanon's insights.

According to Fanon, one of the most virulent legacies of slavery and of colonial relations is the black man's internalization of a Manichaean worldview that casts whites as superior

29 Ibid., 91.

30 Fanon's father once brought home two "tirailleurs sénégalais," that is, two men from the black infantry regiments that France recruited from its sub-Saharan African colonies to fight the war, and commented that he and his family were Martinicans, not *nègres*. About this episode of Fanon's life, Macey observes that "ironically, and quite spontaneously, the Fanon family behaved in just the way that a white family in France might have done: they charitably entertained the troops from the black African colonies" (*Frantz Fanon: A Biography*, 62–63). As child, Fanon was significantly discouraged from speaking Creole, the "mother tongue" of any Martinican (Glissant, *Le discours antillais*, 297) and a language that was produced on the plantation during slavery. As Macey explains, the middle classes did not want to be associated with the Negro origins of the language, hence the ban on speaking it in schools and often at home (*Frantz Fanon: A Biography*, 60–61).

31 "Look, a negro! . . . Mama, look at the negro, I am scared!" Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 90.

32 Glissant, *Le discours antillais*, 105.

33 Celia M. Britton, *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 87.

and blacks as inferior. As a result, Fanon explains, black people tend either to succumb to a "mimetic impulse," through which they seek to emulate white values, or they resort to the valorization of blackness that Negritude writers promoted. Neither of these responses to colonialism, according to Fanon, offers a viable alternative to the black man. In the first instance, the desire to be white alienates the colonized from himself and leads to a splitting of the ego, since the identification with whiteness can never be total. Indeed, either the black man fails to wholly divest himself of the white view of himself as black and inferior, or, in his desire to occupy the white man's place, he remains haunted by the avenging slave's anger.[34] The black man is thus subject to a process of self-division that makes him act and behave differently when in the presence of whites. This causes a profound pathological alienation that is shared by both the colonized and colonizers, since whites too are affected by the Manichaean worldview in which races operate. In other words, Fanon's crucial intervention in psychoanalytic terms was to show, first, that black people's neurosis is not just theirs but the result of a collective form of mental illness and, second, that it emerges not as a result of family-based and individual traumas but from contact with a white worldview that belittles them.

While we may take this for granted today, the insight that psychoanalytic interpretation *must* be articulated with a socioeconomic analysis was revolutionary at the time Fanon wrote his first book.

> Il demeure toutefois évident que pour nous la véritable désaliénation du Noir implique une prise de conscience abrupte des réalités économiques et sociales. S'il y a complexe d'infériorité, c'est à la suite d'un double processus:
> -économique d'abord
> -par intériorisation ou, mieux, épidermisation de cette infériorité, ensuite.[35]

This sociodiagnostic radically challenged classical studies, such as Octave Mannoni's 1950 *Psychologie de la colonisation*, which offered an analysis of the dreams experienced by Malagasies during the bloody rebellion of 1947–48. Whereas for Mannoni the Malagasies could only be colonized because they suffered from a preexisting dependency complex, for Fanon, assigning such dependency as a preexisting condition not only is reprehensible but also obscures the scope of colonialism's material and psychic violence on the colonized. It is a similar sense of an uncompromising ethics that one finds in Glissant's discussion of the psychological effects of colonialism, including in societies that no longer exhibit straightforward forms of colonial domination, where "la domination par un Autre est occultée."[36] In *Le discours antillais*, Glissant expands on the "violence désirante du discours," by which he means "il s'agit du désir d'être Autre (où autrui est aliéné) et du désir d'être ailleurs (où le pays

34 Ibid.
35 Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 8. "It goes without saying, in our opinion, that the effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of economic and social realities. If there is an inferiority complex, it is due to a double-pronged process that is:
-first economic
-and then, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalization of this inferiority."
36 Glissant, *Le discours antillais*, 48; hereafter cited in text.

est raturé)" (500),[37] and in keeping with Fanon, he does so consistently in the context of a discussion of Martinique's economic situation postdepartmentalization. For Glissant, like for Fanon, the "trauma de la discontinuité" (188) occasioned by the ruptures in Antillean history (the series of "cassures" due to events such as slavery or departmentalization) defines the Martinican collective unconscious in ways that cannot be understood outside of the analysis of the economic processes that determine Martinican society today.

For Glissant, Martinique's departmentalization and subsequent assimilation is thus part of the "nonhistory" of the Caribbean (25, 172). Similarly, some critics have suggested that it is Fanon's disillusionment with the island's departmentalization in 1946 that led to his involvement with Algeria as a form of compensation.[38] After violent unrest erupted on the island in December 1959, Fanon published an article in *El Moudjahid* in January 1960 describing the Fort-de-France incidents as "the first manifestation of the Martinican national spirit."[39] And although this "embryonic revolution" led nowhere, Fanon's preoccupation with Martinique did not subside, and, according to Glissant, actually peaked in the last months of his life.[40] Fanon often mentioned how Algeria's future victory would help the West Indies,[41] and references to Martinican culture and society abound in his writings, including in those that appear to be exclusively about Algeria.[42] As Macey notes, "the final image of the revolt of the wretched of the earth is not that of an Algerian freedom fighter carrying a gun, but of a doomed Martinican *marron* with a blood-stained machete in his hand."[43] Like Glissant, Fanon's vision for Martinique included independence within a West Indian Federation.[44]

Martinique is a country where *dépossession* (to use Glissant's term) is caused not by visible material domination but by the eradication of any form of autonomous economic production (48): "Il n'existe plus une seule marchandise que les Martiniquais produisent de manière totalement autonome pour leur usage généralisé" (197).[45] This is a context in which social classes are therefore unable to make sense of themselves in relation to one another, since what determines one's class identity is precisely one's relation to production or distribution circuits (199). This is also a context in which political decisions concerning education, health, or the youth are all made elsewhere. Even "culture" is imported, Glissant tells us, all the more so since the Antilles is defined by the absence of a preexisting "arrière-pays culturel" (203, 325). As a result, Martinique's status is one of "passive" and "alienated" consumption as well

37 "The desiring violence of speech," that is, "the desire to be someone else (whereby the other is alienated) or the desire to be elsewhere (whereby one's country gets erased)."
38 See Albert Memmi, "La vie impossible de Frantz Fanon," *Esprit* 39, no. 406 (September 1971): 248–73; and Françoise Vergès, "Creole Skin, Black Masks: Fanon and Disavowal," *Critical Inquiry* 23 (Spring 1997): 578–96.
39 Fanon, quoted in Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography*, 418–19.
40 Ibid., 424.
41 Simon de Beauvoir commented on Fanon's profound frustration at being unable to be politically active in Martinique. See Ibid., 421.
42 For instance, references to surrealism, Negritude, jazz, and "tam-tams" in his books only resonated with the Martinican context.
43 Ibid., 426 (italics in original).
44 Ibid., 423. Also see Frantz Fanon, *Pour la révolution africaine* (Paris: Maspero, 1964), 90.
45 "There is no longer a single item of merchandise that is entirely produced in Martinique for Martinican usage."

as of global and collective irresponsibility (59, 494). The country is completely dependent on subsidies from the metropole in a structure Glissant calls "la mendicité sociale organisée," or "organized social begging" (154).

Like Fanon, Glissant thus believes that Martinican society and its neuroses do not preexist colonialism but derive from it: "La société martiniquaise ne préexiste pas à l'acte colonial, elle en est littéralement la création" (356–57).[46] He too emphasizes that "nous croyons à la répercussion des données socio-historiques non seulement sur les croyances, les moeurs, les idéologies (ce qu'on appelle les superstructures), mais aussi, *dans certaines conditions*, sur la formation d'un champ de pulsions 'communes' qu'on pourrait alors appeler l'inconscient d'une collectivité" (487; italics in original).[47] In other words, sociohistorical conditions *effect* and affect the formation of common drives that constitute a "collective unconscious," and individual pathologies cannot be understood outside of the social relations of alienation that generate it. Unlike Fanon, however, Glissant does not believe that revolutionary action can overturn a situation in which "la domination par un Autre est occultée" (48), where the principle of domination is obscured. Whereas for Fanon, of *Damnés*, the only solution to the psychological alienation experienced by the black man is violence, Glissant finds an alternative in the very workings of language and speech that he (like Fanon) identified as a symptom of the profound alienation of the Antillean.

Glissant discusses "le délire verbal" (412), or "verbal delirium," as one of the forms neurosis takes in societies where domination is obscured. Like Fanon, however, he believes that the effects of the sociopolitical context impose constraints on both colonized and colonizers so that "verbal delirium" is actually "la tentation de tous" (625), a condition that affects everyone rather than just a few pathologized individuals. In other words, he echoes Fanon when he describes what is accepted as the social norm (the elite's speechifying, for instance) as a symptom of the same kind of abnormality that defines the "verbal delirium" of the disenfranchised. And insofar as "routine verbal delirium" is a symptom of the social situation, it can, unlike *pathological* forms of verbal delirium, be cured through political action. Glissant then distinguishes between four forms of verbal delirium that are respectively used to communicate (popular form), dramatize (popular form), represent (elitist form), and persuade (elitist form), and he privileges the "dramatizing verbal delirium" as a form of "madness" that, like pathological verbal delirium, exposes the "tourment d'histoire," the "torment of history" (646–51, 655). Insofar as such dramatizing delirium forces the community to look at itself, it is perceived as "mad," but it is a socially important form of "madness" that functions both as an auto-analytical force of resistance and as the collective conscience of the people (683). In J. Michael Dash's words, "this manifestation of madness is an exemplary state of extreme consciousness for Glissant and not a form of pathological behavior" and is linked to a "culture

46 "Martinican society does not preexist colonialism but was literally produced by it."

47 "We believe that the sociohistorical affects not only belief systems, customs, and ideologies (what we call superstructures) but also, *in certain conditions*, the formation of 'common' drives that can be referred to as the collective unconscious."

of survival in Martinique."[48] And, as Celia M. Britton points out, "this in turn explains Martinicans' distinctively greater tolerance of 'madness,' compared with Europeans: the dramatizing delirium fulfills the function of a socially necessary *acting out* of collective unconscious conflicts."[49] People may not always want to be confronted by it, but it is a self-conscious "spectacle" that needs to be seen.

This form of subversion from within is one of the ways in which Glissant extends Fanon's insights. Indeed, while Fanon, like Glissant, resisted the idea promoted by the Negritude movement that there exists an "authentic" language (the black man's own language) as an alternative to the mimetic drive, he did not see any problem with the colonized's "proper" use of standard French as a way of refuting existing stereotypes about black linguistic incompetence. And although Fanon, unlike Glissant, did not advocate for a "new" language or develop a poetics around the implications of Creole for a new vision of culture and society, he did, on the eve of the formation of the West Indian Federation in 1958, write an article in *El Moudjahid* mentioning Creole as the expression of a new "West Indian consciousness" and nation.[50]

In *Le discours antillais* as well as in his later *Poétique de la relation* (1990),[51] Glissant echoes Fanon as he breaks away from notions of (black or African) origins and rootedness, and challenges rigid ideals about the purity of inherited cultures. Indeed, one of Fanon's most remarkable contributions to the discussion of national consciousness is his explosion of romantic assumptions concerning national identity. Whereas the traditional notion of nation implied a common and homogeneous social, culture, and ethnic identity, and usually even a common origin in the sense of history, tradition, or descent, Fanon explodes the concept's anchoring in fixed notions of race and culture. He represents the traditional culture of the past as open to reinterpretation rather than as an inert and immutable condition waiting to be unearthed, and he grounds a successful national consciousness in dynamic rather than ossified oral traditions:

> On another level, the oral tradition—stories, epics, and songs of the people—which formerly were filed away as set pieces are now beginning to change. The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental. There is a tendency to bring conflicts up to date and to modernise the kinds of struggle which the stories evoke.[52]

Fanon thus revises decolonizing nationalisms' typical evocation of a pure and stable precolonial past in favor of a dynamic model that emphasizes cultural change.[53]

48 J. Michael Dash, "The Madman at the Crossroads: Delirium and Dislocation in Caribbean Literature," *Profession* 7 (2002): 41.

49 Britton, *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory*, 93 (italics in original).

50 Fanon believed in the possibility of an independent Martinique that would simultaneously belong to a West Indian federation/nation. The federation ceased to exist in 1962. See Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography*, 416.

51 Edouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

52 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 240.

53 See Benita Parry, "Resistance Theory/Theorizing Resistance, or Two Cheers for Nativism," in Peter Hulme, Francis Barker, and Margaret Iversen, eds., *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 172–96. Parry discusses how contemporary writers such as Wilson Harris and Glissant recuperate figures of colonial

Extending this insight, Glissant proposes in his work a model of Antillean identity that foregrounds the ceaseless intermingling of languages, races, cultures, religions, and customs in the Caribbean context. His creolized aesthetic is thus the natural extension of Fanon's unmooring of culture from its fixed and predictable parameters. He also, however, takes Fanon's paradigm one step further to dramatize not just the heterogeneity of the Caribbean but the interdependency of plantation cultures in the Americas. What is more, like his predecessor's emphasis on cultural transformation, which paradoxically occurred in the context of his discussion of nationalism, Glissant's transnational poetics and mosaic of infinitely multiplying "relations" finds its most vivid instantiation in the space of the Martinican nation. Indeed, Glissant's regenerative and relational model is grounded in the geographical and cultural space of Martinique, and it is geographical markers like the "Black Beach," on the southern coast of Martinique,[54] or "The Diamond Rock," a volcanic uninhabited islet off the southern coast,[55] that become the symbolic sites through which the relationality of the modern world is discussed and embodied. As Michelle Praeger explains, "one finds in Glissant's work a discourse of geographical continuity meant to compensate for the nonhistory of the Caribbean."[56] In Glissant's "poetics of location," then, his privileging of a particular cultural, national, or geographical space not only does not hinder Relation but actually provides the very condition for it. And if by *poetics of location* we indeed mean "recognizing our location, having to name the ground we're coming from, the conditions we have taken for granted,"[57] then certainly Fanon's Martinican-based analysis of race relations evokes Glissant's use of the *Martinican* social and geographical landscape as a springboard for theoretical and philosophical formulations that transcend it.

One would think that a cultural model that embraces mutability and the coming together of cultures may necessarily be more lukewarm in its critique of the effects of colonialism. Yet, as Fanon's and Glissant's interventions both illustrate, insight into cultural heritage as a site of interaction need not compromise on one's condemnation of the "dépossession" resulting from colonial and neocolonial relations. Both men's sustained engagement with the socioeconomic and neocolonial conditions in Martinique, for instance, distinguishes their writings from the kind of "bland interactive model" to which "the postcolonial fixation with free-floating hybridity" sometimes leads.[58] Their openness to a cultural process of unceasing transformation (which, for Glissant, constitutes Relation) derives not from an inherent or essential condition of blackness but from the experiences of slavery and oppression that define black history and

resistance in oral traditions and popular memory without "enacting a regressive search for an aboriginal and intact condition/tradition from which a proper sense of historicity is occluded" (ibid., 173).

54 Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation*, 135.

55 Dash, "Madman," 40.

56 Michelle Praeger, *The Imaginary Caribbean and Caribbean Imaginary* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 83.

57 Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979–1985* (New York: Norton, 1986), 129. Rich coined the phrase "poetics of location" to advocate for a responsible kind of feminist criticism.

58 Dash, "Madman," 37.

(collective) memory. As Macey puts it, Fanon's "nation is the dynamic creation of the action of the people, and his nationalism is a nationalism of the political will . . . , not of ethnicity."[59]

Fanon concludes *Peau noire, masques blancs* with a Sartrean model of existential radicalized consciousness that, according to Macey, "is not a plea for racial equality but . . . leaps into a future that escapes all ethnic determinations."[60] While Glissant's creolized aesthetics is not indebted to Sartre, its cultural explosion takes the transcendence of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and national divisions to levels Fanon could not have imagined and turns it into a full-fledged poetics fundamental to Caribbeanness and the New World. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see that there is a specific line of descent that links contemporary philosophers of transnationalism, such as Glissant, the créolistes, and Antonio Benítez-Rojo, to the Martinican prophet of nationalism.[61] Neither is it difficult to see why Frantz Fanon's sociodiagnostic remains an indispensable step in the salutary process whereby racial identities lose their conventional hold on the workings of culture.

59 Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography*, 389.

60 Ibid., 42.

61 "No person with a truly Caribbean identity—carries his or her own true name, just as his or her skin pertains to no fixed race." Antonio Bénitez-Rojo, "Three Words towards Creolization," in Kathleen M. Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau, eds., *Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998), 58. Bénitez-Rojo's influential *Repeating Island* also dramatizes an aesthetics of relationality irrespective of socioethnic differences. See Antonio Bénitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James E. Maraniss (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996). Similarly, the créolistes urge us to "quit using the traditional raciological distinctions, and to start designating the people of our countries, regardless of their complexion, by the only suitable word: Creole." Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité*, 90.