

FANON'S

dialectic

OF

EXPERIENCE



ATO SEKYEI-OTU

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1996

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For Mansa

With deepest love and immeasurable gratitude

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CONTENTS

	Abbreviations for Works by Frantz Fanon	x
	Prologue	i
1	REREADING FANON	10
	<i>Postindependence Hermeneutics</i>	10
	<i>Narrative as Dialectic</i>	24
	<i>Dialectic as Politics</i>	31
2	IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE	47
	<i>History as Antidialectic</i>	47
	<i>Aristotle as Witness</i>	55
	<i>Antidialectic as Space</i>	72
	<i>Struggles over the "Dividing Line"</i>	87
	<i>The Dividing Line as the "Divided Line"?</i>	99
3	BEWILDERING ENLIGHTENMENT	101
	<i>Narrative, Catastasis, Dialectic</i>	101
	<i>"The Weary Road toward Rational Knowledge"</i>	111
	<i>Baneful Inconsequence? The Life History of the</i> <i>"National Bourgeoisie"</i>	123
4	POLITICAL JUDGMENT	157
	<i>The Ambiguity of Exclusion</i>	157
	<i>Reprieve of Prodigal Reason</i>	171
	<i>Allegories of Appropriation</i>	185
	<i>Woman the Measure</i>	211
	Epilogue: The Record and the Vision	236
	Notes	243
	Index	269

ABBREVIATIONS FOR WORKS BY FRANTZ FANON

- AR *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays.*
Trans. Haakon Chevalier. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
Translation of RA.
- BS *Black Skin, White Masks.*
Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press,
1967. Translation of PN.
- DC *A Dying Colonialism.*
Trans. Haakon Chevalier. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
Translation of SR.
- DT *Les Damnés de la terre.*
Paris: François Maspero, 1968.
- PN *Peau noire, masques blancs.*
Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952.
- RA *Pour la révolution africaine: Ecrits Politiques.*
Paris: François Maspero, 1969.
- SR *Sociologie d'une révolution.*
Paris: François Maspero, 1968.
- WE *The Wretched of the Earth.*
Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press,
1991. Translation of DT.

Note: Translations that I have revised are marked "RT."

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PROLOGUE

The imagination that produces work which bears and invites rereadings, which motions to future readings as well as contemporary ones, implies a shareable world and an endlessly flexible language.

—TONI MORRISON, *Playing in the Dark*

Is it perhaps in the nature of intellectual artifacts to defy in the rhythms of their fame and demise all semblance of sequential order? In the decade or so immediately following the untimely death of Frantz Fanon in 1961, writers produced a steady stream of commentaries on his life and work—journalistic assessments, scholarly papers, and full-length books. Irene Gendzier's *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study*, published in 1973, may conveniently be taken as marking the end of this first prolific wave of Fanon studies. Then, in the remainder of the 1970s, came a period of relative neglect and intermittent attention. Some doctoral dissertations apart, Emmanuel Hansen's *Frantz Fanon: Social and Political Thought* (1977) stands out as the major published work on Fanon in that period.

A veritable renaissance of Fanon studies occurred in the 1980s. Someday a historical sociology of knowledge will perhaps shed some light on the reasons for this remarkable revival. Among its notable products are: L. Adele Jinadu, *Fanon: In Search of the African Revolution* (1980, 1986); Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact: Fanon's Clinical Psychology and Social Theory* (1983); Hussein

Abdilah Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (1985); and Patrick Taylor, *The Narrative of Liberation: Perspectives on Afro-Caribbean Literature, Popular Culture and Politics* (1989). Although Taylor's book is not exclusively devoted to Fanon, it identifies Fanon's texts as a paradigmatic instance of what he calls "liberating narrative"—as distinct from "mythical narrative"—in Afro-Caribbean discourse. As exemplifications of this "liberating narrative," Taylor offers a sustained and compelling account of the philosophy of existence and conception of culture that informed Fanon's psychiatric practice and political project. The significance of that political project for contemporary postimperial history has been eloquently evoked by no less a witness of our times than Edward Said. In his magisterial *Culture and Imperialism*, Said salutes the "visionary and innovative quality of Fanon's final work [*The Wretched of the Earth*]" for "the remarkable subtlety with which he forcibly *deforms* imperialist culture and its nationalist antagonist in the process of going beyond both toward liberation."¹

But it is to the collective enthusiasm of so-called colonial discourse theorists and postcolonial critics that we owe the current explosion of interest in Fanon. Headed since the mid-1980s by Homi Bhabha and inspired by postmodernist visions of the auspicious impurity of being, these theorists and critics have discovered in Fanon a precocious if sometimes perfidious ancestor. I applaud the tremendous contribution of Bhabha and kindred scholars to the Fanon renaissance. But although I am not unmindful of the preoccupations of these critics, I depart from their overwhelming concentration upon the significance of Fanon's work for understanding the psychodynamics of otherness and marginality. I revisit Fanon's work as an African who, though trained, employed, and residing in the West, is exercised first and foremost by the disasters of the postindependence experience in Africa. I reread Fanon in light of that experience and the hopes and fears it inspires as South Africa—no doubt a unique society, yet an emblematic instance, in Fanon's eyes, of the colonial condition—reinvents itself: reinvents itself, with Nelson Mandela already delivering stern remonstrances, in ominously Pan-African fashion, against "the forces of anarchy and chaos," against all those benighted enough to think that injustice, despite or rather because of the official abrogation of apartheid, is alive and well; all those who are in consequence misguided enough to proclaim the revolution in permanence. In thus making contemporary African history the

impetus for my return to Fanon, I am attempting to redress an imbalance noted by Kenneth Mostern—namely, the almost exclusive concern of recent Fanon studies with the diaspora of the metropolis.²

Needless to say, my African-situationist reading of Fanon is by no means intended to promote a monopolistic back-to-the-motherland appropriation of his vision. Of course, Fanon belongs to the Caribbean; less restrictively, he belongs to what Paul Gilroy has called the “black Atlantic world”;³ less restrictively still, he belongs to the world. Still, I am troubled by what seems to me to be a consequence of the geopolitical provenance and preoccupations of these current commentaries on Fanon. And this is their postmodernist commitments. I believe that in the hands of colonial discourse theorists, such postmodernist commitments result in the evisceration of Fanon’s texts: they excise the critical normative, yes, revolutionary humanist vision which informs his account of the colonial condition and its aftermath. I argue that the agnosticism of these postmodernist readings, in common with some nationalist appropriations of Fanon, deprives us of weapons with which to confront some of the urgent questions of the postindependence world: questions of class, ethnicity, and gender, of democracy and human rights, against assertions of cultural particularity and difference. I elicit from Fanon’s texts a normative vision that enables us to confront these issues. Ironically, the implications of an African-situationist reading of Fanon are going to be anything but nationalist.

But it is not only with respect to geopolitical orientation, thematic focus, and metapolitical commitments that I part company with the mainstream of the Fanon renaissance. I also want to raise anew the question of the formal character and epistemological status of Fanon’s texts. For although there is a great deal Fanon’s interpreters disagree on, they are virtually united in according utterances in his texts the unambiguous status of propositional statements and doctrines. An emblematic case is the discourse of violence in the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*. Detractors and defenders of Fanon alike have found in this discourse a doctrinal prescription. From Hannah Arendt to Ashis Nandy, there is hardly a mention of Fanon in any account of contemporary social thought and movements which does not see “Concerning Violence” as a teaching—perverse advocacy or justificatory theory, but a teaching all the same. Thus, Hussein Bulhan would acquit Fanon of the charge that he was an “apostle of violence” and a “prisoner of hate”; he would do so,

however, by offering a more adequate account of “Fanon’s *theory* of violence” (my emphasis). Quite recently Charles Taylor, citing Fanon as “one of the key authors” in discourses of “the politics of recognition,” asserts that “Fanon recommended violence as a way to [the] freedom of the colonized.”⁴

It seems to me that such characterizations of Fanon’s account of violence—characterizations that confer upon it a conceptual and indeed a prescriptive status—are symptomatic of a more general hermeneutic approach to his texts. And that approach is betrayed by the very titles of books and essays on Fanon. Consider some of those I have already mentioned: Emmanuel Hansen, *Frantz Fanon: Social and Political Thought*; Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact: Fanon’s Clinical Psychology and Social Theory*. And more recently: Yves Bénot, “Ethique et politique chez Cabral et Fanon”; and Hussein M. Adam, “Frantz Fanon as a Democratic Theorist.”⁵ Such titles, particularly when they are invoked by sympathetic interpreters of Fanon, indicate a will to induct him into the pantheon of Social Theorists and Political Philosophers. Who will gainsay the importance of these induction ceremonies, given the tradition’s habits of exclusion? A recent volume on “radical philosophy,” for all its historical self-consciousness and “countertraditional” impulses, barely mentions Fanon, consigning his name to the bibliography.⁶ But there is, as they say, a price for everything. The effect of these canon-crashing works on Fanon, their titles functioning as heraldic insignia, is to bestow upon utterances in his texts the coercive finality of irrevocable propositions and doctrinal statements. This may not be an unmixed blessing.

I therefore propose, as an alternative hermeneutic procedure, that we read Fanon’s texts as though they formed one dramatic dialectical narrative. Some twenty years ago I indeed hit upon the idea that Fanon’s discourse was dramaturgical in form.⁷ But the conclusions I drew from that observation now appear to me to have been wrong-headed or, at least, inadequately thought through. First, I drew a rather rigid and invidious distinction between drama and narrative. I then suggested that Fanon’s recourse to the dramatic form in his representation of the colonial condition was an enforced choice, one dictated by the fact that the colonial experience by its very nature made a narrativist account of its meaning well-nigh impossible. Today I hear Fanon as saying that that experience could not have been so petrifying as to render its vicissitudes incapable of being

dialectically dramatized in narrative form. The Fanon who emerges from this reassessment is indeed a thinker, eminently deserving of induction, if you will, into some redesigned pantheon of thinkers; a complex thinker. I argue, however, that the complexity of Fanon's thinking resides, at least in part, in its formal structure.

What, then, does it mean to read Fanon's texts as if they constituted a dialectical dramatic narrative? Briefly and provisionally put: It means, first, that the relationships between utterance and proposition, representation and truth, enacted practice and authorial advocacy, are rendered quite problematic. It means, furthermore, that an utterance or a representation or a practice we encounter in a text is to be considered not as a discrete and conclusive event, but rather as a strategic and self-revising act set in motion by changing circumstances and perspectives, increasingly intricate configurations of experience. Accordingly, I will take issue with the presumption that pictures of the world and rhetorics of the human situation evoked at determinate moments of Fanon's texts *always* commit him to a conclusive and unambiguous endorsement of such pictures and rhetorics. Simultaneously at work in this presumption and in the related assessments of the objective validity of Fanon's descriptions are versions of the intentional and referential fallacies. I see the unwarranted conflation of what Fanon enacts, dramatizes, and narrates—perceptual judgments, speech acts, experiential episodes in the life of historical agents—first, with Fanon's own settled convictions, and, second, with propositional statements about states of affairs. We shall encounter instances in which seemingly privileged pictures and rhetorics are reviewed, renounced, and replaced in the course of a movement of experience and language of which Fanon is the dramatist, albeit in the role of a passionate participant and interlocutor. The result is a critical and visionary narrative that provides a vantage point from which we may measure the promise and performance of postcolonial life.

And it is the language of *political* experience that I propose to feature as the principal subject of Fanon's dramatic narrative. A consequence of this focus on the political is what some might regard as a serious neglect of what was, after all, the object of Fanon's professional work—clinical psychology and a psychoanalytically informed study and treatment of psychopathology. I certainly treat Fanon's psychological and psychoanalytic observations rather allusively. In so doing I depart, once more, from the tendency on the

part of colonial discourse theorists toward a reductively psychologizing reading of Fanon. But I believe that in this I am ironically following in the path of Fanon himself. For Fanon delved deeply into the psychic life of the colonized, explored for an understanding of that psychic life rival schools of psychology and psychoanalysis, only to conclude that the psychic and the psychological deserve in the “colonial context” the status of dependent rather than determining realities. Hussein Bulhan, author of the most extensive study of Fanon’s understanding of the psychological, would seem to go even further, discerning in that understanding a general metapsychological attitude that transcends the colonial context. Bulhan speaks of Fanon’s “determination to explain *human* psychology within its essential socio-historical coordinates” (my emphasis), of Fanon’s rejection of “psychological reductionism,” indeed of his “radical sociogeny.”⁸

To be sure *Black Skin, White Masks*, the work from which the psychologizing reading of Fanon principally draws its inspiration, would seem to be less than univocal concerning the logical status of the psychic and the psychological. The very introduction in which Bulhan’s talk of Fanon’s “radical sociogeny” finds its textual authority sees Fanon declaring that “only a psychoanalytical interpretation of the black problem can lay bare the anomalies of affect that are responsible for the structure of the complex.”⁹ In the next breath, however, this seemingly programmatic statement is virtually renounced, specifically in the course of Fanon’s strictures on Octave Mannoni in the fourth chapter. There Fanon asserts that given our knowledge of the causal effects of power relations, social hierarchies, and ideologies upon psychic structures, the constitution of phobogenic objects, and the like—in this instance the presence of the Senegalese soldier as a phobogenic object in the dreams of the Malagasy—“the discoveries of Freud are of no use to us here” (PN, 104; BS, 104). On this view, the secret of the dream life of the colonized is to be found not in ethnopsychanalytic extensions of Freudian categories but in restoring this dream life to “*its proper time . . . and its proper place.*”

Despite this evidently absolute repudiation of “the discoveries of Freud,” Fanon—in what may be read as a repeated return of the repressed—keeps appealing to canonical psychoanalytic categories in order to account for the psychopathology of the colonized. But these experiments in piety eventually end in acts of metatheoretical parri-

cide. Fanon's appeals to Lacan will serve as illustrations. Three times in *Black Skin, White Masks* he invokes the name of Lacan: on the antecedents of psychosis as an explanatory model for understanding the crisis of recognition suffered by a black doctor in the white world (PN, 69; BS, 61); on the family as "psychic circumstance and object"—that is, as the putative pathogenic site of all human neurosis (PN, 135; BS, 141); and last, on the ubiquity of the Oedipus complex as emblematic cause of all our woes (PN, 144; BS, 152). In all these cases, Fanon denies a primary determining role to the canonical term; in the case of the Oedipus complex, he all but denies its existence, let alone its foundational status, in Antillean society. The reason for these antireductionist stances, Fanon suggests with respect to the alleged universality of the determining function of the family drama, is that the case for assigning pathogenic causality to this and other phenomena is "particularly complicated" in his universe of discourse (PN, 135; BS, 141). Complicated, that is, by what he regards as the truly decisive force of the "cultural situation"—ideological practices, dominant view of the world, relations of power—in the generation of psychic disorders such as the Antilleans' "affective erethism" toward figures of whiteness, no less than their Negrophobia (PN, 144; BS, 152).

The general lesson that Fanon brings from his devotional explorations of Lacanian and other psychoanalytic narratives is that the neurotic alienation that defines the colonial relationship is an open secret, a condition whose genesis and nature are by no means "invisible" (PN, 145; BS, 153). The *ur*-concept of psychoanalysis, the unconscious, consequently provokes this veritable apostasy: "Then there is the unconscious. Since the racial drama is played out in the open, the black man has no time to 'make it unconscious.' The white man, on the other hand, succeeds in doing so to a certain extent, because a new element appears: guilt. The Negro's inferiority or superiority complex or feeling of equality is *conscious*. These feelings forever chill him. They make his drama. In him there is none of the affective amnesia characteristic of the typical neurotic" (PN, 142; BS, 150).

Fanon is led by considerations such as these to conclude that "there is a substitution of dialectic when one goes from the psychology of the white to that of the black" (PN, 143; BS, 151; RT). *Contra* McCulloch, Fanon is not here asserting some Negritude idea of racial difference, some essentialist Senghorian notion of racial psychology.¹⁰

Rather, he is proffering a contextualist argument for questioning the causal terms of psychoanalysis—an argument, ultimately, for questioning not simply the universality of the psychic phenomena identified by psychoanalysis but the very idea of the primacy of the psychic and the psychological, in light of the manifest sociopolitical genesis and character of the “lived experience of the black.”¹¹

These observations make it difficult to accept without serious qualifications Homi Bhabha’s reading of Fanon as “privileging the psychic dimension.”¹² In Fanon we have the remarkable phenomenon of a life devoted to psychological inquiry and clinical practice that results in an antipsychologistic understanding of the human situation.¹³ And if it is true, as Bhabha says, that Fanon articulated “the problem of colonial cultural alienation in the psychoanalytic language of demand and desire,”¹⁴ we need to be clear just what he construed the function of this “psychoanalytic language” to be. In a revealing passage, Fanon says that the psychic effects of the colonial relationship, the alienation that relationship breeds, may fruitfully be captured by “psychoanalytical *descriptions*.” He is therefore able to assert: “The Negro’s behavior makes him *akin* to an obsessive neurotic type, or, if one prefers, he puts himself into a complete situational neurosis” (PN, 68; BS, 60, my emphasis: RT). In short, Fanon ultimately gives psychoanalytic language no more and no less than an analogical or metaphoric function, as distinct from a foundational or etiological one, in accounting for the condition of the colonized and their dreams: above all, their dreams, their manifest dreams. To the Lacanian dictum that “the unconscious is structured like a language,”¹⁵ Fanon might have responded that the dreams of the colonized may well be structured like the language of neurosis but that they are occasioned by the language of political experience. It is with Fanon’s interpretation of these dreams and this language that this book is centrally concerned.

My intuition that this interpretation is most revealingly read as framed by a dramatic narrative structure led me to pay close attention to the linguistic acts of Fanon’s texts. I discerned in these linguistic acts so many subtle and surrogate dramaturgical devices: stage directions, signals of imminent plot twists and complications, markers of incipient ironies and reversals, choric commentaries and points of strategic complicity or critical difference between protagoidal utterance and authorial stance. It therefore became imperative to verify standard English translations of Fanon’s texts by constantly

returning to the French originals. As a result, I have found it necessary on several occasions to revise existing translations of specific words or phrases whenever I concluded that these translations are simply erroneous or misleading or insufficiently attentive to the dramatic intentions and resonances of Fanon's discourse. Although I am neither a native speaker nor a professional student of the French language, I regard my efforts in this regard to be absolutely crucial to my reconstructive enterprise. In studying a work of interpretation, I found out that translations are themselves decisive acts of interpretation. Some of my substantive disagreements with construals of certain passages in Fanon's texts hinge on what seems to me to be a critic's uncritical reproduction of a misleading rendition of Fanon's words in the existing translations. On all occasions where I have provided revised translations, I indicate this with the abbreviation "RT" after the page reference. As for the accuracy or felicity of my renditions, I must leave that to the judgment of experts. If my efforts generate a new appreciation of the challenge that is Fanon, they will have served their purpose.

1

REREADING FANON

Fanon will be relevant when both the windy "African Revolution" and its sequel, the reaction, are finished.

—AYI KWEI ARMAH

The time has come to return to Fanon.

—HOMI K. BHABHA

POSTINDEPENDENCE HERMENEUTICS

The time has indeed come to remember Fanon. Homi Bhabha is right. "Remembering," he writes, "is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection." Rather, it is "a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present."¹ The challenge of remembrance resides, however, not only in its temporality, the complex manner in which the needs of the present and the call of the future fashion our relation to texts and contexts of the past; it is also a matter of place, a function of the rememberer's location in the map of contemporary history. For if all remembering is a political activity, a return to worlds and works occasioned by a community's circumstances and auguries of its destiny, that which we take to be the defining home-stead in that community's expanse is decisive in framing the kind of questions we address to a text, to say nothing of the lessons we elicit from it. Returning to Fanon from the diasporic regions of refashioned empires, remembering him in the context of life lived as "postcolonial

subject" on the outskirts of the body politic's affections, life lived in the archetypal and auspicious estrangement of "minority discourse," Bhabha comes to Fanon with a question such as this: "How can the human world live its difference? How can a human being live Other-wise?"² It is possible to go even further and "recuperate" Fanon—as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., reports—for a "global colonial discourse theory" according to which "colonial discourse" is a paradigm of all discourse.³ Some might object that such a promotion of Fanon to the status of "a global theorist"—"a global theorist of alterity"⁴—threatens to obscure "the originality" which Fanon's own texts sometimes impute to the "colonial context" (DT, 9; WE, 40). But who will question the mandates of place and time that ordain this manner of remembering Fanon? Who will abrogate the rights of a hermeneutic situation for which Fanon is first and foremost the author of *Black Skin, White Masks*, first and foremost the dramatist of cultural racism construed as exemplar of the violence and ambivalence of desire and discourse—a hermeneutic situation, consequently, for which all of Fanon's texts are to be read in the light of *Black Skin, White Masks*?

But what if your return to Fanon is solicited by a somewhat different situation in the world, a somewhat different geopolitical affiliation? In the following pages I undertake a rereading of Fanon prompted by the postcolonial condition, here understood as the determinate experience of postindependence African societies, in relation to contemporary world history. Such a geopolitical sensibility is by no means untouched by the Fanon who speaks with everlasting eloquence to the diaspora of the cosmopolis, and indeed to the universal drama of alterity. But it is perhaps the special mandate of the *postindependence reader* to accord relative prominence to the other Fanon: the prophetic voice whose significance, according to Ayi Kwei Armah, would become manifest "when both the windy 'African Revolution' and its sequel, the reaction, are finished."⁵ Remembered in this context, Fanon's work takes its place among those founding texts of the postcolonial world that may now be read as anguished premonitions of congenital errors and imminent tragedies, but also as testimonies to the fledgling promises and prospects of independence. And what a special place! For Fanon's texts are informed by that privileged vision granted by the specific gravity of the history of the African diaspora. It is as if he brought to the contemplation of the contemporary African experience the epic imagination and

tragic sense of racial destiny that animate such texts as Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* and his *Tragedy of King Christophe*. This is reason enough to assign Fanon's work pride of place. But his work is also unique in the manner in which it marshals empirical detail, poetic language, and a theoretical engagement with major metanarratives of human bondage and freedom to fashion a critical account of colonialism and of the postcolonial condition. Three decades after Fanon's death, the signal facts of contemporary African and world history warrant a reconsideration of his vision.

First among these signal facts is the economic, political, and utter moral bankruptcy of postcolonial regimes, with their unending train of rapacious and murderous tyrants, chieftains, and cliques, a succession of brutal enigmas which confound our very ability to name the social identities of principal individual and collective agents. Who are these people? And from where do they draw their fearful and fleeting power? Can this power be traced to some determinate configuration of social being—say, class, faction, gender, ethnicity? Or is it the function of accident in league with some bizarre psychopathology, some unnameable disease of the mind? Whatever the social identities of these postcolonial rulers or the ultimate sources of their conduct, the thirty-year war of predation and coercion waged by them has left in its wake a toll of unspeakable suffering and disorder. Under internal and external pressures these leaders are now busy refashioning their despotic regimes into simulacra of democracy. And confessing despair and impotence before the enormity of the accumulated morass, they have entrusted the work of repair to international overlords bent on administering plans for recovery that, at least in the foreseeable future, will spell even more devastation for the vast majority of citizens.

Into this dispiriting landscape came—this is the second signal event in contemporary African history—the dramatic changes in South Africa: the official abolition of the laws of apartheid and the establishment of majority rule under the leadership of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress in 1994. Is this event, for all its particularities, the iridescent light that truly relieves the oppressive monotony of the encircling African gloom? Or is it but another cruel prelude to what Armah, threnodist of the postcolonial condition, saw as the ineluctable miscarriage of “the beauty of the first days”? It would be the height of impertinence to deliver a verdict on processes that are too complex, still inchoate, and in any case much too

singular to indicate anything like predictable outcomes. It would be even less appropriate to envisage these outcomes as the inexorable consequences of the structure of power relations that defined South African society as a system of domination. And yet for those battling apartheid in its hour of unrelenting terror, expectations and projects regarding the postapartheid world seemed to be intimately related to what was construed to be the ultimate foundation of power in that social formation. They asked, in an idiom which must sound curiously quaint in these fashionably postmetaphysical days: What is the principal contradiction which frames this system of human bondage and the form of insurrection it spawns? Is it race or class? Is the power structure of apartheid founded ultimately on class relations or race relations? Indeed, is apartheid, the division, symbolization, and justification of social positions and identities according to a racial code, an irrational excrescence upon a system of exploitative production which is in its innermost essence indifferent to race? Is apartheid as polity inconsonant with apartheid as economy? And is rational necessity fated to triumph over profitless myth? Or is race, far from being an atavistic obstruction of the discourse of pure bourgeois reason, a necessary principle of organization required by this protean system known as capitalism—required by it in this particular scene of its global drama? Yet another alternative is possible. Could it be that race is so overwhelmingly present in the determination and effects of social relations, at once cause and consequence in the language of Fanon, that we should discard all attempts to give apartheid as polity and economy generic names, orthodox or revised? Are we not speaking here of a regime that is *sui generis*, a peculiar institution with a logic of antagonism all its own, inviting from its victims an act of historical retribution unique to itself?⁶

Questions such as these were no mere scholastic disputes in taxonomy. What would be the political and ethical consequences of ascribing primacy to class as opposed to race? The consequences for the Other, no less than for Africans? Would it, among other things, spawn a vicious sectarianism within, the obverse side of which is a kind of vapid transracial ecumenism in whose purview race features as a mere mask of human and historical universals? Or does it generate a critical collective introspection, a cathartic revelation of family secrets, a revolutionary vigilance attentive to ancestral, contemporary, and nascent relations of inequality within the racial group? What, by contrast, are the political and ethical consequences

of attributing centrality to race? Does it result in an indiscriminate and genocidal antagonism toward the Other on the one hand, and, on the other, the tyrannizing protectionism of racial confraternity, a separatist chorus so mystified by its own chant of togetherness that it stifles the anguished cries of other languages of separation and subjugation, old and new—class, gender, ethnicity? Stifles them only to have to confront them sooner or later—sooner rather than later—as recalcitrant litigants in the social and political disputes that will surely come into full view the day after national liberation, if not the day before? With what critical weapons do you fight apartheid and its legacy while all the while looking over your shoulder for the present and imminent danger of Buthelezi, to say nothing of authoritarian and repressive tendencies in the accredited parties of liberation? Are we not, we who have known the treacherous reversals of postcolonial history, are we not condemned to be always furtively looking over our shoulders in order to check the bitter fruition of a macabre possibility—the emergence of reincarnations of Amin, Mobutu, Bokassa, even the great and tragically flawed Kwame Nkrumah and their retainers out of the ashes of Anglo-Boer domination? Three decades of postcolonial history make these questions necessary.

Meanwhile the world has witnessed the spectacular collapse of repressive statist regimes in eastern Europe and the “socialist motherland” itself. Construing what may well be tragic and monstrous deformations of the communist idea to be its inexorable consequences, the triumphant West under the aegis of a resurrected pax Americana has pronounced the entire momentous enterprise dead. One day history may well see in this verdict a precipitate reduction of humanity’s perennial dream of radical justice to the vicissitudes and fate of a local if prodigious experience. More interesting and inestimably more valuable are the many complex and variegated debates within the radical tradition of political thought and practice in general and Marxism in particular—debates which, to be sure, preceded the collapse of these authoritarian regimes but which will no doubt be centrally informed and enriched by recent events.

At the heart of this critical reassessment is the question whether, in addition to constraining historical conditions, there may have been fatal flaws in the foundational principles of Soviet communism: fatal flaws that from the beginning vitiated the possibility of an open, just, and democratic socialist culture at home and abroad. At home and

abroad, because the possibility of a domestic democratic arrangement and an uncoerced democratic internationalism is at bottom a version of what a proponent of "the new democratic theory" has described as "the traditional philosophical problem of particulars and universals."⁷ Could it be that the tragic fate of Soviet communism is, at least in part, the result of its failure to honor in theory and practice a critical insight of the early Marx according to which universals come from the uncoerced gathering of the "many ones"? "Democracy," Marx proclaimed, "is the generic constitution" precisely because it honors this syntax of universals and particulars.⁸ On this view, an authentic democratic association both locally and globally is possible only as a consequence of the unhampered freedom of particular agents fashioning a community of meaning out of finite provinces of existence. And is it not just such a version of democratic association which Césaire had in mind when he asserted the rights of "the peculiarity of 'our place in the world'" against Soviet communism's centripetal "metaphysics" of solidarity—in a word, against Soviet communism's reduction of particulars to the status of derivative and dependent accidents?⁹

For one interlocutor of the tradition, Norman O. Brown, "Marxism has an opportunity to find its soul in this its moment of historical defeat" by discarding its erroneous founding metaphysics.¹⁰ Brown is not the first to hold up Marxism's Hegelian inheritance as the principal villain in its theoretical foundations. Yet was it not the author of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* who bowed in amazement before that "tremendous power of the negative" which is none other than the capacity of "an accident" to "attain an existence of its own and a separate freedom"?¹¹ To the Marxist tradition's metanarrative of the struggle for freedom and community in the modern world, the story of the colonized subject as told by Fanon comes as one instance of that claim of the accident and the particular to independence, even priority, which Hegel named "the tremendous power of the negative," and which the anti-Hegelian Foucault has called the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges."¹² Ever since W. E. B. Du Bois charged that "imported Russian communism" ignored "the incontrovertible fact" of a "vertical fissure, a complete separation of classes by race" as the *differentia specifica* of the colonial-racial system,¹³ the story of colonial and racial subjugation in the modern world has indeed figured as one of the most compelling challenges—another is the story of gender—to all allegories or unitary theories of human

bondage and liberation. Wole Soyinka has described the privileged landscape of this centrifugal discourse as a “separate earth.”¹⁴ And Cedric Robinson has called its principal topographers members of “the Black radical tradition,” naming among them Du Bois, C. L. R. James, and Richard Wright but barely mentioning Fanon.¹⁵ It is to this extended family of interlocutors of Marxist allegory and kindred metanarratives that Fanon incontestably belongs.

In the course of this study, I hope to specify some of the formal and substantive properties of Fanon’s version of this dissenting and decentering knowledge. But let me state from the beginning what now seems to me to constitute a signal feature of Fanon’s discourse, one that gives it its remarkable tension and anguished eloquence. I am speaking of the irrepressible presence in Fanon’s critical vision of an openness to the universal: its demand for the resumption by the colonized subject of “the universality inherent in the human condition”; its insistence that “there will be an authentic disalienation only to the degree to which things, in the most materialistic meaning of the word, will have been restored to their proper places” (PN, 28, 29; BS, 12, 15–16); and, consequently, its proleptic narration of the story of the “colonial world” from the standpoint of a vision of “human things” (DT, 139; WE, 205). True, for Fanon the revolt against the colonial order as against imperialist forms of knowledge “transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history’s floodlight upon them” (DT, 6; WE, 36). But this insurgent claim of the inessential to paramountcy, this veritable Foucauldian insurrection of subjugated knowledge, does not in Fanon ultimately lead to the radical refusal of the discourse of the universal now so fashionable in post-Foucauldian social thought. So that Fanon is able to honor the rights of particularity as an epistemic and political obligation without sanctioning an epistemological and ethical relativism on the grounds that, according to one recent view on the matter, “universal discourse is the discourse of the privileged.”¹⁶ And true enough, there are memorable occasions in Fanon’s discourse when he recalls the unyielding absolutism of the experience of particularity as a moment devoutly to be relished—relished and guarded against the constructive violence of universalizing knowledge. Such is Fanon’s living and livid memory of Jean-Paul Sartre’s celebrated account, in *Black Orpheus*, of the itinerary of Negritude, the paradigmatic statement of particularity in modern African discourse. It will be recalled that

Sartre waxed eloquent before Negritude's insistence on the peculiarities of the African way of "being-in-the-world," only to reduce this idea of difference to a necessary moment in the universal history of social being and consciousness.¹⁷ (For a Foucault, indeed, this was nothing more than a counterfeit universal, nothing more than "the great historico-transcendental destiny of the occident.")¹⁸ Against Sartre's allegorizing reading of Negritude, against an exogenous dialectic which narrates the experience of consciousness from the standpoint of absolute knowledge, Fanon registered a visceral protest: "For once, that born Hegelian had forgotten that consciousness has to lose itself in the night of the absolute, the only condition to attain to consciousness of self. In opposition to rationalism, he summoned up the negative side, but he forgot that this negativity draws its worth from an almost substantive absoluteness. A consciousness committed to experience is ignorant, has to be ignorant, of the essences and the determinations of its being . . . And so it is not I who make a meaning for myself, but it is the meaning that was already there, pre-existing, waiting for me" (PN, 128; BS, 133-134).

No doubt, Fanon would cast a suspecting look at the coercive objectivism of Sartre's account of Negritude—its manifest objectivism, but also its covert and informing ethnocentrism. What he would never renounce, despite his detective hermeneutic of Western reason, is a sense of the possibility of "human things," a truer version of human universals beyond what he would call, in "Concerning Violence," the "narrow world" of the colonial experience (DT, 7; WE, 37). What he would never jettison is a larger vision of the imperative of freedom, one that is obscured and displaced by the "simplifying" violence of "colonial domination" (DT, 166; WE, 236).

This, it now seems to me, is the profound meaning of the demand Fanon makes in the introduction to his very first published work: "And truly it is a question of unleashing the human being [*Et véritablement il s'agit de lâcher l'homme*]" (PN, 26; BS, 11; RT). From the beginning, the central question for Fanon was always that of releasing possibilities of human existence and history imprisoned by the colonization of experience and the racialization of consciousness. Accordingly, Fanon's narrative enterprise will be haunted by this dual exigency: How can one hold in critical tension and relation the "absurd drama" of the colonial condition and the pristine vicissitudes of the human predicament which that "drama" seeks violently to suppress and to usurp (PN, 180; BS, 197)? How can one keep faith

with that which is compellingly eccentric, while all the time remembering and envisaging that which is universally human, all-too-human? How can one convey the special and specific properties of the colonial world, with all its peculiar institutions of affective, communicative, socioeconomic, and political relations, in a manner that recognizes in them signs of an "existential deviation" from human commonalities (PN, 31; BS, 16)? By means of what narrative procedures would Fanon be able to bear witness at once to the pressing contingencies of lived history and to those archetypal formations of social being and consciousness forged by what on occasion he calls "History"?

To read Fanon in this manner, to return to him in this fashion in the aftermath of political independence, is to recognize in his texts an unsuspected formal complexity and substantive richness. This is indeed a significantly different Fanon from the one I encountered or rather allowed myself to encounter (if I may be permitted a personal reassessment) as the subject of an earlier critical study.¹⁹ A product of the ideological debates of the times, I was attempting through a reading of Fanon to chart a theoretical and political path that would transcend the antinomies of nationalism and orthodox Marxism. I was looking in Fanon for an original utterance, a statement on the African experience in its global aspects which respected its irreducible specificity; a statement which for all that could be certified as a contribution to the tradition of radical social and political thought. I could attain this happy coalescence of the singular and the universal only by demonstrating and insisting on the absolute coherence of Fanon's texts and meaning, a coherence derived from and reflecting the unity and uniqueness of the experience Fanon describes, what he himself calls "the originality of the colonial context." Miffed by what I suspected was an old-fashioned racist tendency to impugn the originality of every utterance on the part of blacks, I was adamant in affirming Fanon's originality both as authorial voice and as a special case of reflected glory—Fanon as an original theoretician of a privileged domain of experience.

The dominant interpretation of Fanon was that he proposed a doctrine, a doctrine with deductive intentions meant to account for the essential structures and fundamental variegations of human experience. Only, the argument went, Fanon's putative doctrine was neither original nor systematic, but, in the words of one interpreter, "an incoherent admixture" of Existentialism, Marxism, and psycho-

analysis.²⁰ Fanon is said to have appropriated these doctrines in the service of a critical description of a universe of experience dominated by race. According to one version of this reading, Fanon rewrites three narrative genres or generic stories—the Hegelian-Sartrean narrative of conflictual recognition, the Freudian narrative of desire, and the Marxist narrative of social relations of production—in terms of a revised master code, that of race. The curtain-raising words of the *Manifesto* are thereby displaced. The history of all hitherto existing society is the history not of class struggle but of race struggle. In a word, Fanon as a left-wing Gobineau, proposing a race-reductionist theory of history and social being on a world scale.²¹

According to another version, the status of race in Fanon's discourse is really allegorical. Race is but a heightened exemplar of the fundamental problems and possibilities of being-in-the-world—above all, an exemplar of the eternal and universal drama of self and other.²²

Thus, through a paradoxical complicity the approach to Fanon's work which sees in it an authorial intention to construct a deductive theory ends up either by enshrining race as the central principle, or by entirely circumventing race and collapsing it into the story of every man and every woman. Either way, Fanon's theory appears to be neither original nor coherent; it is a derivative teaching, tinkering with different and irreconcilable schools of thought, and impoverishing each and all of the parental sources in the process.

To this notion of the promiscuous text living off purloined sources I was moved to oppose an insistence on the originality of Fanon's theory and its circumstance. I argued that Fanon's universe was a radically determinate one, that of a colonized and racially subjugated humanity. In that universe, I heard Fanon as saying, ontology is rendered inexpressible. I took literally and at face value the famous words of the climactic fifth chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks* according to which "every ontology is made unattainable in a society that has been subjected to colonialism and its civilization" (PN, 108; BS, 109: RT). And I found support for this anti-ontology in Adorno's veto against grounding critical discourse upon "the question of man": "The question of man . . . is ideological because its pure form dictates the invariant of the possible answer."²³ The point of this invocation of Adorno was to justify a reading of Fanon that would willfully forget the recalcitrant presence in his texts of a discourse of the universal—a discourse that functions as an unyielding if harried interlocutor of the claim of the contingent to ultimacy. For the

necessary condition for making a compelling case for Fanon's originality, it seemed to me, was to secure and insulate the unique properties of the colonial experience from the generic properties of being human; indeed to place the latter in brackets, or rather to erect—irony of ironies—an epistemological apartheid between the two. As if to say that only in the aftermath of racial and national liberation would other stories (generic human stories) of bondage, conflict, injustice, and insurrection become at all possible. The result was a narrative caesura between “colonial history” and “human history,” as opposed to their complex, fugal interconnection.²⁴

Today, a new reading is necessary. First, it is a reading that listens to recent challenges from poststructuralist notions of the complexity of literary texts, indeed the complexity of verbal signs as well as social agents and the manner in which they configure into structures of meaning and historical action. Second, it is a reading prompted and educated by the postindependence experience. Among the harrowing lessons of that experience are the uses and abuses of the plea of particularity. In the postcolonial world, “the night of the absolute”—wherein Fanon wanted for a while to grant refuge to the agony and the ecstasy of the particular—became the nightmare of absolutism. It may well be that what *is* ideological in our present circumstances is not at all the question of human universals but rather the idea of absolute difference, according to which such discourses as those of democracy, human rights, feminism, and class struggles are so many occidental relativities masquerading as human commonalities. This may well be the moment to wonder whether the only adequate response to the dissembling particularism and phony universalism of the imperialist West is a relativism of truth, justice, and beauty that dares to call itself by its name.

What indeed could be more ideological in the postcolonial condition than such a simplistic and reactive relativism? Ideological in at least one of the senses in which the authors of *The German Ideology* understood that term: “in all ideology men and their relations appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*.”²⁵ After all, what is our situation? An omnivorous transnational capital that requires repressive local political agencies to discipline their populace into acquiescing to its draconian measures; a free market of material and cultural commodities whose necessary condition of existence is the authoritarian state; the incoherent nationalism of dominant elites who are in reality transmitters and enforcers of capital's coercive universals:

this is our historical situation. Under the circumstances, we are faced not with a choice between universalism and particularism but rather with the task of wresting both an authentic democratic universalism and an equally authentic democratic nativism from the collusive compact of transnational capitalist dictatorship and local privilege.

How does such an understanding of the postindependence situation affect our rereading of Fanon's texts? We are forced, to be sure, to be suspicious of those otherworldly universalists who would ignore Fanon's careful and empathetic account of the "historical necessity" that generates what he called "the will to particularity" in anti-imperialist and postcolonial discourses (DT, 147, 168; WE, 214, 239). But we must become equally wary of those postmodernist readers of Fanon who would recruit him for the fashionable war against humanism. For when in *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon pillories the intelligentsia of the colony for mouthing a vacuous and indeed Europe-besotted "universal standpoint," when he scolds the West for repeatedly traducing "the sometimes prodigious theses" it has put forward, for interminably "talking of humanity while murdering human beings everywhere," he surely did not intend to throw out the bruised baby with the bloodied water (DT, 151, 232, 229; WE, 218, 315, 311: RT). The answer for him was to be found precisely where he had discovered it since *Black Skin, White Masks*—in "a new humanism" (PN, 25; BS, 9).

By all means let us refrain from harnessing the terms of this "new humanism" to some stainless metaphysical necessities and guarantees. Fanon says precisely this when he tells us that it is from the vortex of lived political experience that a novel idea of humanity would be refashioned: "*In the objectives and methods of the struggle [for national liberation] is prefigured this new humanism*" (DT, 173–174; WE, 246, my emphasis: RT). By all means let us, with Sharon Welch, call the value attributes of this new humanism "proleptic universals."²⁶ The question remains: Without some such terms as our axiological yardstick, how are we to distinguish an insurrectionary consciousness of what Césaire called "the peculiarity of our place in the world" from, say, self-serving relativistic stances such as the refusal of democratic ideals and civil liberties by ruling cliques in the name of cultural difference? How do we tell apart an insurgent community of meaning forged by critical interlocutors of the world-system from the innocuous nihilism of composite cultural idioms promiscuously signifying everything and contesting nothing? Fanon

is our most prescient witness to the fact that an authentic relation to particulars and universals within the world-system requires narrative and political acts of dissent and affirmation more complex than what is registered by the acquiescent globalism of free marketers, or the segregationist particularism of cultural nationalists, or the self-indulgent hybridism of certain "postcolonial critics."

That is why we the people of postindependence societies who have savored the uses and abuses of history construed as a special case and commanding submission to its peculiar exigencies need to reassess Fanon's legacy. In particular, we need to take a second look at how the narrative structure of Fanon's discourse honors what I have described as a critical tension between the "absurd drama" of the colonized subject and the "proleptic universals" of human experience. Could it be that Fanon's discourse is characterized not by that version of radical historicism which would refuse to examine the question of colonial domination and the politics of race in relation to the question of human essences?²⁷ Could it be that this discourse is characterized not even by a kind of narrative caesura, a representational division of colonial history and the politics of race from the exploration of human history—moving from one to the other as discrete scenes and orders of experience—but rather by a kaleidoscopic tension and unity of plot?

If this is so, then we must adjust our reading of semantic relations among Fanon's texts, no less than those within and between scenes and pages of one text, in order to attain a comprehensive understanding of the action of his narrative. We need to read these texts and scenes within texts *dialectically* rather than *sequentially* or as discrete entities. In particular, we need to read the discourse of race—the discourse of a racially divided Manichean world manifestly predominant in *Black Skin, White Masks* and the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*—in its interactive relation with, say, the discourse of class and of local forms of human universals which appears interstitially within these very texts and subsequently in other utterances. For this rival discourse profoundly questions and corrects the rhetoric of an undifferentiated collectivity dispossessed and debarred without exception from the city of privilege. It questions and corrects the rhetoric of the seamless identity of the damned as perceived from what the opening pages of *The Wretched of the Earth* call the standpoint of "*immediacy*." By virtue of such a dialectical

reading of scenes, we are led to "perceive a change," to borrow Marx's language, "in the physiognomy of our *dramatis personae*."²⁸

It will be recalled that Marx's account of "the buying and selling of labour-power" in *Capital* asserts (so one prevailing interpretation goes) a seamless reciprocity between "Moneybags" and "free-labourer," between buyer and seller, the *dramatis personae* of the scene of exchange. So faithful, it seems, is this exchange to the principles of freedom, equality, and Benthamite utilitarianism, that Marx allegedly refuses to impose any transcendent critical verdict upon it. Only after the curtain falls on this scene and the action of production unfolds are the ironic exploitative implications of "free" exchange revealed. Such a sequential reading of the action, however, would make Marx an acquiescent bourgeois contractualist by day and, so to speak, a dialectical ironist on the night shift. A dialectical reading of the two scenes would, by contrast, hear in the noisy scene of exchange something like the members of a chorus in a Sophoclean drama commenting on the action, thanks to their rueful knowledge of its antecedents and ensuing outcome. The disclosure of the *whole* story of the capital-labor encounter which would occur in the scene of production is in effect prefigured in this choric rumination upon the prehistory and ineluctable aftermath of the action of the marketplace. Is this not why Marx speaks of the revelatory change occasioned by the scene of production as a change not of the *dramatis personae*, but in the *physiognomy* of the *dramatis personae*?

Of course, a sequential reading of Fanon's work is also possible. Such a reading would—to cite a paradigmatic instance—take the text at its manifest and simple word when it asserts a formal logic of radical irreciprocity between colonizer and colonized as collective subjects, and, *a fortiori*, a seamless solidarity of the colonized. A sequential reading would then report the disclosure of rifts and fissures in the racial confraternity as a posterior event, the perfidious Fall that is postcolonial history.²⁹ Such a reading of the action, however, would make Fanon a race reductionist while the sun shines with blinding clarity upon the empire, and a historical materialist the moment the dawn of independence both illumines and beclouds the map of social reality. By contrast, a dialectical reading would reveal the *dramatis personae* of the colonial world and of the nascent independent society in their ironic and complex kinship. The genealogy of what Achebe has called "the great collusive swindle" that

is neocolonialism would then be detected in the political and moral economy of the colonial experience.³⁰ Above all, such a reading would provide a powerful critical weapon with which to contest African nationalism's seductive strategy: its stage theory of historical agenda, by which I mean its repressive plea for closing ranks at all cost for now, deferring to another time other questions of social subjugation and separation—questions that just may have something to do with our common irreducible humanity, questions that are at any rate cognate with the social matter of political discourse. And is it not this retrieval of the material terms of political and moral discourse, is it not this possibility, which Fanon envisioned and voiced in anguished accents in his first work: "There will be an authentic disalienation to the degree to which things, in the most materialistic meaning of the word, will have been returned to their proper places." But what, precisely, is the epistemological status of this project of returning things to their proper places? A re-cognition of generic essences of the social world? The discovery of a radically new continent of human realities? Or a re-vision (if I may borrow Adrienne Rich's expression)³¹ of singular universals?

NARRATIVE AS DIALECTIC

The reader will recognize in these questions and in the interpretive procedure they adumbrate resonances of the narrative structure of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In a way, my interpretive procedure, treating *The Wretched of the Earth* as the pivotal text, reads Fanon's discourse as coqueting with Hegel. I begin by reconstructing Fanon's representation of what the colonized subject's bondage and insurrection look like when, according to the stage directions of "Concerning Violence" (the opening chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*), "you apprehend the colonial context *in its immediacy*" (DT, 9; WE, 40, my emphasis: RT). I review Fanon's portrait of the structures and figures that make their appearance in this scene of "immediacy." The principal structure depicted here is that of domination as the consequence of an abrupt event of conquest, one that foists upon a vanquished race modes of material and symbolic production wholly alien to its native necessities. Domination, also, as a relation of social closure, coercive segregation, and existential prohibitions fixed in *space*: in a word, apartheid. The paradigmatic figures, accordingly, are those of the *colonizer* and the *colonized*, two different

"species" inhabiting radically separate and unequal "zones" of existence, caught in a drama of desire and language in which the possibility of reciprocal recognition is doomed to futility. An *antidialectic* of absolute difference and total opposition—that is to say, a relationship of "pure violence"—this structure and the perverse intercourse of its protagonists invite a vengeful form of insurrectionary action cast in the image of revolutionary catastrophism.

I then follow the reflexive and revisionary commentary of Fanon's text upon its own inaugural claims. More precisely, I pursue the suggestion that the truths told by these structures and figures, with all the uncompromising force of transparent and viscerally lived experience, are as obscuring as they are compelling: a suggestion founded on an interstitial distinction between what it means to *apprehend* an object *in its immediacy* on the one hand, and, on the other, what it means to *comprehend* this object—that is to say, what it means to discover its conditions of "intelligibility" (DT, 6; WE, 36: RT). I reenact the phenomenological consequences of this distinction: the dramatization of richer and more complex configurations of social being and consciousness made manifest by virtue of what the text calls an "arduous path toward rational knowledge" (DT, 92; WE, 145: RT). By "rational knowledge" I take Fanon to mean deracialized and disquieting understandings of those universals of the "history of societies" (DT, 90; WE, 143): universals in which the "colonial context," for all its undeniable contingency and idiosyncrasy, is fatefully implicated; universals from which colonial history derives even as it deviates; universals to whose peculiar local forms postcolonial humanity must ultimately bring their political judgment.

What is the significance of this internal revision of the standpoint of immediacy? Simply this: that race is the tomb wherein the historical consciousness is interred, alive; that try as it might, the empire can never wholly erase intimations of possibilities native to the very idea of humanity; that there is life after apartheid—no, that there is life, human, all-too-human life, palpitating within the peculiar institution of apartheid.

The affinity with Hegel's narrative method suggested by this reading is one that is neither fortuitous nor foisted on Fanon's discourse. For in a seminal text, "The Negro and Hegel" (PN, 195–200; BS, 216–222), Fanon critically appropriates Hegel's allegory of master and slave in the *Phenomenology* in order to display the distinctive properties of the colonizer-colonized relation. But there is more to

Fanon's critical appropriation of Hegel than that specific reading of Hegel's famous metapolitical story. That story is, after all, but a signal moment in the affairs of spirit, one paradigmatic form among the variegated "series of its own configurations"—the series of shapes through which self-consciousness must journey in order to attain "genuine knowledge" and "a completed experience of itself."³² It is with this larger figural body that Fanon's discourse coquettes.

Fanon follows Hegel in describing the procession of the order of things and configurations of consciousness as a "pathway," "*cheminement laborieux vers la connaissance rationnelle*" (DT, 92; WE, 145). I, too, will go along with Hegel and call Fanon's account of this movement a *dialectic* of experience. Dialectic because it narrates the generation of relations infinitely more complex than the "mass relationship" or "simplifying" logic of the colonizer-colonized opposition (DT, 9, 166; WE, 53, 236). Dialectic because it testifies to the dissolution of "the two metaphysics" of absolute difference to which colonizer and colonized alike subscribe (PN, 26; BS, 10). And dialectic because this movement of experience consists, according to Fanon, in a "progressive enlightening of consciousness" occasioned by the appearance or resuscitation of realities hidden from the inaugural purview of the colonized subject (DT, 90; WE, 143). In the process, structures, figures, and relations initially presented as the defining characteristics of social reality, hence as the ultimate terms of political and moral discourse, are shown—after the manner of Hegel—to be the misleading products of "immediate knowledge": they are shown to be "abstract and too immediate"³³ in the identities, oppositions, and unities they are held to exhibit. Among these categorial terms are of course the primary pair of colonizer and colonized, but also subsequent dualisms: that of a complicitous "bourgeois fraction of the colonized people" versus an allegedly uncompromising and insurrectionary peasantry and lumpenproletariat; or that of the moral derelicts and cultural "turncoats" of the city versus a country people in possession of moral coherence and an inviolate cultural purity (DT, 64, 25, 67; WE, 108, 61, 112). These characterizations, together with the politics and moral reasoning they sanction, are subjected to an agonizing reappraisal. The result, in Fanon's words, is that "the idyllic and unreal clarity of the beginning is followed by a semi-darkness that bewilders consciousness" (DT, 92; WE, 145; RT). The clarity which presided over the first stages of the colonized subjects' journey of experience, in particular their understanding of social division and

human solidarity—that initial clarity is no more to be found. In place of an obscuring transparency and the enlightening gloom that succeeds it, one finds the disclosure of a “new reality” or rather “multiple realities” pregnant with “new meanings” (DT, 93–94; WE, 146–147). Not unlike the emergence and cognition of “the new true object,” on Hegel’s view, from the imprisoning and impoverishing representations of “natural consciousness.”³⁴

Here the similarity ends. For how does Hegel understand the structure of this dialectical journey? Let us listen to him: “*Inasmuch as the new true object issues from it, this dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object, is precisely what is called experience [Erfahrung].*”³⁵ And what is *experience*? Hegel informs us of his idiosyncratic usage of this term:

This exposition of the course of experience contains a moment in virtue of which it does not seem to agree with what is ordinarily understood by experience. This is the moment of transition from the first object and knowledge of it, to the other object, which experience is said to be about. Our account implied that our knowledge of the first object, or the being-for-consciousness of the first in-itself, itself becomes the second object. It usually seems to be the case, on the contrary, that our experience of the untruth of our first notion comes by way of a second object which we come upon by chance and externally, so that our part in all this is simply the pure *apprehension* of what is in and for itself. From the present point of view, however, the new object shows itself to have come about through a *reversal of consciousness itself*.³⁶

In the closing passages of the introduction to his *Phenomenology*, Hegel tells us that the philosopher’s work of comprehension, the “scientific cognition” of the dialectical movement, coincides with a necessary process of self-enlightenment native to consciousness itself: “Because of this necessity, the way to Science is itself already *Science*, and hence, in virtue of its content, is the Science of the *experience of consciousness*.”³⁷

In *Hegel’s Concept of Experience*, Martin Heidegger takes up the principal terms of Hegel’s account of the pathway of consciousness toward absolute knowledge: “the *dialectical* movement which consciousness exercises on itself” as “the Science of the *experience of consciousness*.” It is Heidegger’s exegesis which justifies my suspicion

that Fanon's coquetting with Hegel stops short of a homonoetic consummation. Heidegger proposes to rescue the term "dialectical" from formulaic and stabilizing construals. For Heidegger, "dialectic" names that "dialogue between natural consciousness and absolute knowledge" which is none other than *experience* itself.³⁸ Now, the word "dialogue" would seem to be a quintessentially *political* term, making the journey of consciousness an eminently political enterprise, and making the truths it attains the results of contending and contestable claims on the part of a plurality of interlocutors. But on Heidegger's etymological account of the word, "dialogue" is rather far from designating a political relationship and a political activity mandated by what Hannah Arendt used to call "the human condition of plurality."³⁹ Dialectic as dialogue is in reality the autoeroticism and soliloquy of the Absolute, its "self-gathering" speech (*dialegein*) as well as its "self-uttering gathering" (*dialegesthai*).⁴⁰

Moreover, Heidegger insists that in Hegel's description of the dialectical movement—"Science of the *experience of consciousness*"—"the two genitives, 'of the Experience' and 'of Consciousness,' indicate not a *genitivus objectivus* but a *genitivus subjectivus*. Consciousness, not science, is the subject that is in the mode of experience. And experience is the subject of science. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the *genitivus objectivus* retains its meaning, though only because the *genitivus subjectivus* is valid. Strictly understood, neither takes precedence over the other. Both designate the subject-object relation of the absolute subject, in its subjectness."⁴¹ These genitives are thus "neither exclusively subjective nor exclusively objective, and least of all a combination of the two. They belong to the dialectical-speculative genitive."⁴² For "experience," ultimately, does not name the galaxy of discrete phenomena and events which narrative presentation is called upon to honor, to "keep to," in order "not to degenerate into an empty construction"; rather, it is "the term for the Being of beings."⁴³ "Experience" designates that "Being" which natural consciousness, in its fixation upon the bazaar of particular objects, "pays no heed to."⁴⁴

What does it mean for the dialectic of experience to be understood in this fashion? What does it matter that dialectic is here the self-gathering speech and onanistic activity of Being—"a disporting of Love with itself"?⁴⁵ This can only mean that, for all the plethora of sociopolitical events and deeds that people the pages of his narrative, Hegel's dialectic is not fundamentally and specifically *political*. We

need not share that indiscriminate suspicion of all talk of dialectic—"Dialectic" is a way of evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict by reducing it to a Hegelian skeleton—that leads Foucault to prefer the discourse of war and battle as the true model of the "history which bears and determines us."⁴⁶ We need only note that absent from Hegel's version of dialectical movement is that strong sense of the political, understood as the relations of power and conflict, subjugation and resistance, which function as the *defining conditions* of problems of truth and meaning. It is this repressive sublimation of the political which Marx had in mind when he described its status in Hegel's speculative system as an "allegory," a story whose beginning and outcome are secured by a superintending metanarrative.⁴⁷ Because Hegelian dialectic is an operation which "consciousness exercises on itself," it is possible in retrospect to see the necessity by virtue of which consciousness would come to grasp the immemorial procession of notional constellations as manifestations of "its own essence," and in so doing "signify the nature of absolute knowledge itself."⁴⁸

Such a narrative resolution is impossible in Fanon's universe of discourse. For the occasion of the journey of experience in that universe is compellingly political, all too implicated in the contingent textures of power relations and contestations to savor the consummation of absolute knowledge. Like the "black soul" which, according to Fanon, is but a "white artifact," the effects of these power relations and contestations in psyche, economy, polity, and culture are radically contingent products of political history, not the self-generated manifestations or "moments" of Spirit's transcendental itinerary. And the modes of the colonized subject's relations to these effects of power—modes of self-alienation and self-affirmation—these are also definitively political situations, occasions of finite and contested acts of public judgment rather than recognizable determinations of "the concept." Judgment: this preeminently political activity will be made necessary precisely because Fanon's narrative will report critical moments in the journey of experience when the very dialectical enlightenment achieved by the colonized subject in revolt eventuates not in the comedy of self-recognition and absolute knowledge, but rather in the disclosure of yet more tangled manifestations of the problems of freedom and community.

Is this characteristic of Fanon's dialectic, namely its constitutive, Gramscian politicism and therefore its openness—more than that, its

willingness to confront the subject of experience with what might be described as an *aporia*—is this not at odds with the impulse to “reach out for the universal” (PN, 180; BS, 197)? Put another way: Is it possible for a narrative to remain dialectical after renouncing its Hegelian antecedents, but without quite ending up with something like a Foucauldian genealogy resolutely abstentious of the discourse of the universal? What shall we make of those moments in Fanon’s narrative when the desire to breathe human commonalities into the “absurd drama” of the colonized, when the will to give voice to the universal, assumes a hyperbolic form? Then, Fanon would be tempted to reduce the eccentricities of the “colonial context” and the politics of race to the eidetic story of the generic human subject’s existential proclivities and historical possibilities. It is as if Fanon wished at these moments to refigure his narrative as a pure allegory of human experience, willfully and completely forgetting all that is peculiarly disfiguring in *his* context, the “colonial context.”

Such is the occasion in *Black Skin, White Masks* when Fanon, overreacting to psychologistic and race-reductionist accounts of racism, comes close to reading race entirely out of the causal explanation of “the black problem”: “The black problem does not resolve itself into the problem of blacks living among whites but rather of black people exploited, enslaved, despised by a capitalist, colonialist society that is only accidentally white” (PN, 183; BS, 202: RT). Such, again, is the case of that passionate history-defying affirmation of subjective freedom in the conclusion to the same work. There Fanon, overcompensating for his earlier revolt against Sartre’s magisterial survey of Negritude, now renounces his erstwhile renunciation of the universal and rejoins the party of humanity unmodified: “I am a man, and what I have to recapture is the whole past of the world. I am not responsible solely for the revolt in Santo Domingo. Every time a man has contributed to the victory of the dignity of the spirit, every time a man has said no to an attempt to subjugate his fellows, I have felt solidarity with his act. In no way should I derive my basic purpose from the past of the peoples of color. In no way should I dedicate myself to the revival of an unjustly unrecognized negro civilization. I will not make myself the man of any past. I do not want to exalt the past at the expense of my present and of my future” (PN, 203; BS, 226). And such, to recall a third instance, is the assertion in another text that “the dialectical strengthening that occurs between the movement of liberation of the colonized peoples and the

emancipatory struggle of the exploited working classes of the imperialist countries" is governed by an "internal relation"; and that this "internal relation," as it were, expresses a prior metaphysical fact—namely, "the organic links between the particular event and the historical development of the surrounding whole," that whole being "the process of human liberation" (RA, 146; AR, 144). Could there be a more classically Hegelian assertion or version of the dialectic of experience than this utterance?

Yet we would do well to remember the rhetoricity of all these utterances. We would do well to see in them now the inadvertent exaggerations of a polemical discourse; now the anguished if precipitate endeavor to transcend, by virtue of one Great Refusal, the unwilling burden of an imprisoning identity and thereby to recapture "forbidden spaces" of existence and self-narration; now the operation of a wish fulfillment, the conflation of the ideal of human solidarity with its existence. Call these utterances exhortative indicatives, invitations to action rather than ontological conclusions. Fanon signals the radical humanism and politicism of his account of experience when he declares that there is no "objective dialectic" possessing the character of "an absolutely inevitable mechanism" which presides over the story of the colonized subject's ascent from bondage to liberty (RA, 172; AR, 170). Under the aegis of a cosmogonic vision generated by the image of racial bondage as lifeless Chaos, Fanon sometimes demands of his people liberation "from an alienation which for centuries has made us the great absentees of Universal History."⁴⁹ But the path of this return to "History," even in this incorrigibly if idiosyncratically Hegelian project, is an open path, the topic of rival discourses. "Everything," Fanon might have said with Gramsci, "is political." That is why his dialectic of experience will leave us with the unending efforts of contending social agents to forge what Césaire called a "common sense" out of disparate idioms of postcolonial life.

DIALECTIC AS POLITICS

I have to engage in a dialogue, to be dialectical.

—ANTONIO GRAMSCI, *Letters from Prison*

That the terms of Fanon's discourse are radically political, that they are in consequence essentially contestable and inescapably open,

answerable claims of collective wills rather than the gratuitous “fruits of an objective dialectic”—this is what I hear Patrick Taylor saying when he describes Fanon’s texts as “liberating narrative.”⁵⁰ It is, however, a characterization that has been forcefully disputed by a recent commentator, Christopher L. Miller, in *Theories of Africans*.⁵¹ Miller’s Fanon is a purveyor of an imperial rationalism pledged to the legislation and enforcement of “transcendental truths.”⁵² In vain did Fanon insist, in an implicit critique of Marxist scholasticism, that the essential questions bearing on the social character and ends of the anticolonial movement could not be settled by an appeal to “an abstract discourse [*un mot d’ordre abstrait*]” or the procedures of deductive “reasoning [*un raisonnement*]” (DT, 24, 116; WE, 60, 175: RT). This and other internal narrative signals are evidently insufficient to persuade a Christopher Miller that Fanon’s works are indeed open texts, solicitous of nonrepressive communicative relations among the differing parts and agencies of the nascent postcolonial body. On the contrary, despite some coy hesitation, Miller holds Fanon accountable, thanks to the allegedly theoreticist foundations of his vision of the national project, for the (mis?)appropriation of his utterances by the Guinean president Sékou Touré in the service of the authoritarian state.⁵³

I shall leave the question of Fanon’s responsibility for Sékou Touré’s autocracy to more able historians of the postindependence African Inquisition who have a special interest in the engrossing philosophical subject—neoclassically explored by Leo Strauss and Alexandre Kojève—of the relation of wisdom to tyranny.⁵⁴ I would like instead to concentrate on that which is infinitely more likely to stand the test of the law of evidence: namely, what *does* Fanon’s text as a *dialectical narrative* say concerning the colonized subjects’ epistemic, ethical, political, and cultural practices as they ascend from bondage to freedom—this ambiguous freedom that is the postcolonial condition? For here is the crux of the problem posed by Miller’s anti-Fanon: What is the semantic import of statements made in the course of Fanon’s narrative discourse, in the course of *any* narrative discourse? What is the epistemological status of sentences, assertions, notional configurations, “truths,” exhibited at discrete moments of a dialectic of experience?

Dialectic of experience as narrative discourse: Miller takes cognizance of Taylor’s description of Fanon’s texts as *narratives*, takes notice of this characterization but then circumvents or rather contests

its political implications. He thinks that framed as they are by adherence to "transcendental truths," Fanon's texts do not promote, cannot promote, that dialogical negotiation of meaning which is the latent promise of dialectical practice. What radically vitiates the possibility of dialogical communication in Fanon's discourse is, according to Miller, a revolutionary national-supremacist stance that would subordinate everything in sight to the imperatives of the nascent nation state. The very idea of the true and the good is allegedly forced by Fanon to serve national necessities. The exemplary and damning utterance is the following passage from *The Wretched of the Earth* partially cited by Miller: "The problem of truth ought also to be considered. In every age, among the people, truth is the property of the national cause. No absolute verity, no discourse on the purity of the soul, can shake this position . . . Truth is that which hurries on the break-up of the colonial regime; it is that which promotes the emergence of the nation; it is all that protects the indigenous people and ruins the foreigners. In the colonial context there is no common standard of truth [*conduite de vérité*]. And the good is quite simply that which is evil for them" [DT, 17; WE, 50: RT). I have deliberately left out of the above quotation two crucial sentences in Fanon's original text which Miller, too, revealingly, fails to cite, and to which I will return presently. Suffice it to say that here in the cited words of the famous paragraph is to be found what for Miller is that pernicious admixture of unvarnished partisanship and absolutism which would inexorably not only provide "a theoretical basis for relativizing truth and ethics" at the level of discourse, but also teach a Sékou Touré to "relativize and liquidate the other" in the name of the "totalized ideas of Revolution, of Nation, and of violence."⁵⁵ All protagonists of difference are thus condemned to theoretical and real death by Fanon's theses on truth: Fanon's sentences on truth are literally "death sentences." For the will to totality must contain every intransigent particular; the "ethical" must devour the "ethnic," construed as the paradigmatic figure of difference. But this is the consequence of an unethical version of ethical universals; an authentically open ethical stance "would be a dialectical relationship between a transcendental truth and respect for the other, for difference."⁵⁶

The reader may well wonder at this stage whether the cardinal philosophical sin of the offending passage from *The Wretched of the Earth* is its epistemological and ethical relativism or rather its tran-

scendental rationalism, or whether Fanon is an absolutist in the morning and a relativist at night—or both at the same time in one nefarious combination. Let us just say that whatever position or positions Miller ascribes—coherently or incoherently—to Fanon, he himself does not in fact object to some sort of relativism as a general philosophical proposition. The founding principle of Miller's entire project, the vindication of difference in life and texts, is predicated on a post-Foucauldian suspicion of the discourse of universals in ethical, political, and aesthetic judgment.

The real issue, then, is the hermeneutic function of these sentences on truth within the *moving body* of verbal and representational acts that is Fanon's dialectical narrative. And it is here, I think, that Miller's reading misses not only the dialogical consequences of Fanon's dialectic but, even more fundamentally, the most elementary significance of Fanon's discourse as a narrative. For if we allow with Taylor that Fanon's texts are indeed narratives, then we can hardly expect what they mean to say to be exhausted by one discrete act of representation, one configuration of experience, in one scene of the plot. We can hardly expect what is dramatized in one such discrete moment to do duty as a foundational principle. In order that an episode be made to perform such a fundamental role, we will have to uproot it from the phenomenological context in which it is placed by the narrative—uproot it and transform it into a conclusive proposition.

This is precisely what Miller does. In an egregious confusion of a textual event with authorial intention, Miller reads Fanon's citation of truth-claims made by representative figures in an important episode of the narrative as the author's ultimate epistemological and meta-ethical theses. In so doing, Miller loses sight of the constraining epistemic and political context in which the text places this reactive and reductive discourse on truth. That context, that perspectival circumstance, is what Fanon, the deviant Hegelian, calls "immediacy." It is indeed impossible to adequately understand the passage in question without a full reconstruction of the principal figures, structures, and rhetorics that make their appearance in this scene of immediacy. Suffice it to say that the entirety of that first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, and much else within and beyond that particular work, is framed by this horizon of immediacy and the typical understandings it generates and constrains. And far from any evidence of authorial assent or even responsibility, far from Fanon's

giving a seal of approval to what is asserted, believed, and done in this scene, what we find is an instant critical commentary interjected into the statements on truth. Let me restore to the passage, then, the critical sentences I deliberately omitted in my earlier citation—critical sentences completely suppressed in Miller's citation: "In every age, among the people, truth is the property of the national cause. No absolute verity, no discourse on the purity of the soul, can shake this position. *To the lie of the colonial situation the colonized replies with an equal lie. His dealings with his fellow-nationals are open; they are strained and incomprehensible with regard to the settlers.* Truth is that which hurries on the break-up of the colonial regime" (my emphasis: RT). "To the lie of the colonial situation the colonized replies with an equal lie." As if this critical ventriloquy were not enough, the next paragraph begins as follows: "Thus we see that the primary Manicheism which governed colonial society is preserved intact during the period of decolonization." It would not be an exaggeration to say that the narrative movement of the entire work constitutes an extended elaboration of the intratextual criticism I have just identified.

Indeed, I would go further and argue that there is a formal characteristic of the work that enables the kind of instant and evidently inconspicuous commentary on the truth-claims of immediate knowledge. Remarkably, this text which is ostensibly a declarative and hortatory discourse manages to exhibit the dramaturgical properties of the dialogical form. No doubt the authorial voice speaks and can be heard. But not before it has let loose on the stage figures and utterances of compelling force making claims on our allegiance. And not before rival voices, the surrogate chorus of the text, have entered their skeptical and ironizing judgments. The result of this dramaturgical procedure is that the finality of propositions made in various scenes is rendered suspect.

In an important passage—one that contains the same treacherous semantic and political possibilities as the sentences on truth—the text in fact draws attention to this dramaturgical quality of its representations. I am speaking of the other famous passage which evokes the intransigent particularism of anti-imperialist discourse: "The challenge of the colonized to the colonial world is not a rational confrontation of points of view. It is not a discourse on the universal, but the untidy affirmation of a specific claim presented as an absolute [*une originalité posée comme absolue*]" (DT, 10; WE, 41: RT). Con-

stance Farrington translates "*une originalité posée comme absolue*" as "an original idea propounded as an absolute." Such a rendition entirely misses the theatrical resonances of the language of the text. It imputes to a performance—albeit a deadly serious performance—the status of a finished doctrine. By contrast "a specific claim presented as an absolute" captures the play within the play, Fanon's dramatization of what is in the first place an act, a political act. On this view, we can hear the text as saying that the antifoundationalism of the anti-imperialist—the repudiation of the possibility of rationally warranted and universalizable propositions—is not a final epistemological and meta-ethical position but a contingent political stance. Would it be too fanciful to suggest that the text here cautions us against a recurrent temptation of anti-imperialist political and ethical discourse—the temptation, precisely, to transform or hypostatize a tactical posture, that of epistemic separatism, into an absolute principle? Could it be, then, that by depicting this epistemic separatism as a compelling performance, the language of the text functions as a performative? That language in effect delivers an admonition that revolutionary particularism is not to be equated with a radical relativism, and that the anti-imperialist critique of purely Western reason must never become a dogmatic antirationalism. We, witnesses and heirs to the anti-imperialist cause, might be dissuaded from making or endorsing such an absolutist move if only we knew that the absolute refusal of the discourse of the universal enacted by Fanon's text is, as Hegel might have said, a "show."⁵⁷ But it would be quite mistaken to conclude that it is *all* a show, a mere parade of dissembling and fallacious stances, creatures of ideology to be smothered and supplanted by transcendental knowledge. No, the mission of Fanon's dialectical narrative is to stage the upsurge of richer modes of reasoning, judging, and acting from the limiting albeit legitimate constraints of "immediate experience" (DT, 36; WE, 74).

In the interstices of the text itself, then, is to be found the operation of something like Ricoeur's "double hermeneutic"—that is to say, a critical understanding of the language of racialized nationalism: the notion that the true and the good are simply descriptions of the claims of a particular people, be it a racial group or a national collectivity, in the blatant exercise of its will to power; the conviction that an immediate transparency in human associations is the gift of blood ties and the solidarity of skin; the belief that the ideal of justice coincides with what Leo Strauss called "the principle of indigen-

ness.”⁵⁸ In Fanon’s own text is to be detected a keen diagnosis of pathological forms of national and local self-assertion and solidarity bequeathed by “the primary Manicheism which governed colonial society.” Among these malignant traits of the nascent postcolonial subject, Fanon would name a “certain brutality of thought and mistrust of subtlety,” a compulsive indifference to difference, all difference (DT, 93; WE, 147).

At the heart of this troubled prognosis is a critical vision of what Fanon elsewhere calls “the truth” of the “nation’s being” (SR, 77; DC, 92): one that is far more variegated in its social texture, and far more challenging to the postcolonial subject’s resources of practical and moral reasoning than the woefully constricted and constricting versions available in the stark immediacy of the “colonial context” and the insurrection it spawns. And because this “truth” of the nation is no longer the simple register of an unambiguous reality and a readily visible relation, that of the colonizer and the colonized—because it represents a prodigious achievement, a complex interweaving of particular stories and shared projects—Fanon will come to call the symbolic mode which enacts this kaleidoscopic reality “a vast epic” (SR, 68; DC, 84).

Of these heterogeneous and rival experiences that are to be configured into the “vast epic” of postcolonial discourse, Fanon says that the “contradictions” they bear were obscured, “camouflaged” by “colonial reality” but also by the language of nationalism (DT, 94; WE, 147; RT). They will have to be disinterred, these disconcerting “new significations,” from the procrustean violence of colonialist leveling, and against the repressions and resistances mounted by the “mystification” of nationalism (*ibid.*). The names of the resurgent realities that will disturb the happy consciousness of the unitarian nationalist are, of course, class, gender, ethnicity. The question is this: Does any of these figures of difference have some legitimate claim to precedence? What can we recognize as the ancestral or the founding or nodal principle of social existence—the site of the “principal contradiction,” as it used to be said not so very long ago? Which one of these phenomena is really real by virtue of some primary properties, such that it deserves priority of representation—narrative and political representation—as a kind of natural right?

To be sure, the “nation’s being” notoriously enough possesses no natural right of existence and narrativity either. What nation does? That the postcolonial African nation state is an artifact, the quintes-

sential political “white artifact,” has been repeated *ad nauseam* by an odd chorus of neotribalists, post-Foucauldian fetishists of the microlocal, and just plain unreconstructed apologists for apartheid for whom that peculiar institution is indeed as African as the drum, just one more conflictual conglomeration of “tribes.” But which modern nation state isn’t an artifact? Is the African prototype less natural and more artificial than others? Less natural and more artificial in relation to what? The questions are endless. Better to drop this invidious inquiry into the natural authenticity of nations, take the postcolonial nation state for what it is, a historical existential reality, and consider the claims to representation of the multiple formations and figures of social identity—class, gender, ethnicity—in relation to this concrete existential universal that is nationality. Is it the case that one of these figures of identity—say, ethnicity—possesses some superior right to representation that eludes the other formations of social being and even nationality itself? The historical truth is that the properties and functions of ethnic formations—the properties and functions of all the resurgent social realities to be adumbrated in Fanon’s dialectic of experience—have little to do with any primordial essences. These properties and functions are, like those of nationality, historical constructs, existential entities.

We shall be told by a Christopher Miller that—compared to the discourse of nationality, all so recent and all so marred by the terrible violence of its “totalizing” project (a violence abetted, on Miller’s reading, by Fanon)—nothing could be more traditional than the reality of the ethnic and of narrative institutions that bestow upon it a symbolic sanction.⁵⁹ As if this privileged antiquity of the ethnic reality and the ethnic symbol erases their earthly historicity. As if we cannot find on the allegedly immemorial bodies of these “traditional” contexts and texts indelible scars of the violence of power. The narratives fashioned in commemoration of these ethnic formations—narratives toward whose pristine tropes and topics Miller shows such an admirable solicitude—what are these narratives but so many regional Aeneids, so many majestic invitations to forget the acts of usurpation by means of which others, other Others, and *their* local stories, were obliged to submit to the authority of someone else’s “final vocabulary”?⁶⁰ Miller urges us to acknowledge the reality of the ethnic fact, urges us to “read” the ethnic text. By all means let us do so, on the elementary condition that we recognize it as being

indeed a *text*, a fictive reality forged with the instruments of power. Before we transform it into the newest object of totemic reverence, a privileged instance of "local knowledge," let us remember that the ethnic symbol is also a testimony to the forcible generation of local universals. Territorial annexation, repressive fabulation, pronouncing an anathema upon the remembrance of things before the conquest, sometimes upon the very fact of conquest (Asante historical "orature" comes to mind here): such are the idyllic proceedings which attended the birth of many an ethnic text. Far be it from me to suggest a moral equivalence between the histories and discursive practices of African ethnic principalities, those of postcolonial state formations, and the colonial systems that preceded them. Far be it from me to follow Yambo Ouloguem's blasphemous calumny, which would find in all three structures barely distinguishable agencies of Africa's "sempiternal agony."⁶¹ The point is simply that all these, ethnic formations included, belong very much to the earthly family of created, contingent, all-too-human things, despite the varying degrees of their antiquity or recency, even of the violence of their construction.

Our obligation, then—and Fanon knew this—in the face of the complex order of things and knowledges in the postindependence world, is not a disavowal of hermeneutic activism, a sort of strict constructionism that would keep the ethnic context in its vaunted independence, even priority, and leave the ethnic text in its putative ancestral integrity, with all its symbolic details, references, essences made inviolate against the allegedly annexationist program of national discourse. For Fanon (and the Fanonist reader confronting the resurgent realities of the social world and the insurgent imperatives of the postindependence condition) would not have been the first interpreter of local African cultural texts to tamper with their "founders' intentions," to transgress the original context of their composition. It is tempting to say to devotees of these venerable emblems of difference that nothing could be more traditional, though perhaps less duplicitous in its political intentions, than Fanon's hermeneutic activism: his habit, deplored by Miller, of enlarging the symbolic territory of ethnic codes to encompass the story of the "nation's being." In effect, *all* constituencies of meaning, because they are historical creations bearing the marks of domination and alienation, need to be reexamined. Nothing commands unconditional allegiance.

Everything, on Fanon's account of the social and symbolic conditions of postcolonial existence, requires to be reread and rewritten. Everything is an invitation to "invention."

This is the prodigious labor which Fanon calls for in his vision of *national culture* evoked in the celebrated fourth chapter of his last work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, but already adumbrated in illustrative forms in the essays that make up *A Dying Colonialism*. It is a vision, as suggested by one of these essays, of the interweaving of disparate "signs," differing vocabularies, into the novel idiom of national existence. Henceforth, writes Fanon with joyful awe, "the *Speech* of the Nation, the *Word* of the Nation, shapes the world while at the same time renewing it" (SR, 81; DC, 95: RT). An Aristotelian might call "national culture"—the vehicle for this ordering function of the Word—the *formal cause* of public meaning in postcolonial society. Except that there is in Fanon's vision an activist, even a voluntarist, understanding of formal causality.⁶² He sees the transformative work of national culture as the outcome of a radical *decision* on the part of the nascent community "to tell a story about itself and to speak" (SR, 78; DC, 93: RT).

It is not at all being prissy to resist the mesmerizing gravity and seductive lyricism of this epic vision, and to wonder aloud about its political consequences. A legitimate question comes to mind. What is the fate of traditional cultural texts intimately tied to specific ethnic identities in this revolutionary project of bestowing integral Form upon a congeries of symbols? In the postcolonial nation's envisaged acts of redescription and self-narration, is there any respect in Fanon's texts for codes and conventions fashioned in response to irreducibly ethnic contexts, hopes, and fears? Or does Fanon's program promote, if not a destructive attitude toward ethnic idioms, at least a sort of piracy, an illicit appropriation of ethnic particulars for the national integration of narrative institutions? Christopher Miller appears to think so. To transfigure, as Fanon shamelessly does, ritual archetypes and heroic symbols indigenous and peculiar to a traditional ethnic canon into prospective emblems of national liberation, to say nothing of the Pan-African idea, is precisely such an act of textual piracy.

A case in point for Miller is Fanon's reading, in the "National Culture" chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, of the poem "Aube africaine" ("African Dawn") written by Kéita Fodéba, who would become minister of internal affairs in Sékou Touré's Guinea, but who

by 1969 would fall victim to the tyrant's manic hunt for conspirators. The poem commemorates the fate of a fictional World War II Mande soldier, Naman, chosen at the bequest of the French authorities to represent his village. Naman sees action in Europe and is captured by the Germans, whereupon he is elevated by his village to the heroic status of "Douga," the order of the vulture. Naman survives, only to die at the hands not of the German "enemy" but of French soldiers. The story is specifically tied, as Miller reports, to "a brutal historical event, the massacre of Senegalese soldiers returning from combat in Europe, by French soldiers at Triaroye, Senegal, on December 1, 1944."⁶³ Death thus ends the prospect of Naman the individual participating in the sacred dance of the Douga, as tradition required. Lycidas is dead, but the show must go on. Others, the poem sings, will in future dance for Naman, dance in Naman's name.

Who are these "others"? That is the question. "Who would not sing for Lycidas?" Who would or rather who would *not* dance for Naman and in Naman's name? Miller is pretty certain who cannot. Insisting on the irreducible particularity of the poem's original reference, Miller will have us know that the "others" can only be those who share the communal memory of Mande ethnicity. And it is precisely such a "restriction" of the poem's reference to this particular context that, alas, "cannot hold" for a Frantz Fanon.⁶⁴ As a prime exhibit of Fanon's flagrant violation of the ethnic symbol's territorial sovereignty, Miller cites the following words with which Fanon sums up his account of the poem: "All those niggers, all those wogs who fought to defend the liberty of France or for British civilization recognize themselves in this poem by Kéïta Fodéba" (DT, 162; WE, 232). "*All* those niggers, *all* those wogs . . ." (Miller, visibly astonished by Fanon's hyperbole, italicizes the word "all" in his citation): this is it, an impersonation of ethnic intimacies by a tyrannical universal, a negation of the rights of particularity. Votary of local knowledge, Miller must undo this constructive violence, must negate the negation—but not, as Fanon himself might have said, "in the service of a higher unity." He must bring a containment policy to bear on the internal colonialism at the heart of Fanon's manifestly national-supremacist, not to mention Pan-Africanist, hermeneutics and politics. "The cost of this universality," Miller protests, "is a bit of the cultural specificity."⁶⁵ Forget, then, about following Wole Soyinka's impertinent example of bestowing the Akan name for Pan-Africa, "Abibiman," upon the distinctly Yoruba deity Ogun.⁶⁶

Forget about "Douga Abibiman." Let Naman and the order of the vulture, let this special narrative of individual death and communal regeneration, rest inviolate in the enclosed space of Mande ethnicity.

History, in the name of which Miller undertakes his spirited vindication of ethnicity against Fanon's allegedly neo-imperial universalism, teaches ambiguous lessons. In the light of postindependence realities, it may well be that the cost of an unswerving allegiance to the sovereignty of the ethnic is a considerable bit of political responsibility (to say nothing of human life)—what Fanon called "a global responsibility with regard to the totality of the nation" (DT, 162; WE, 232); responsibility, that is to say, for an active engagement with the disparate terms of order that define the postcolonial condition. A necessary condition for such a responsible engagement, I should think, is that the relationship between these terms of order—say, the ethnic and the ethical—is not and cannot be one of identity ("The ethical and the ethnic are one and the same in the context of the *Poèmes africains* of Kéita Fodéba," says Miller).⁶⁷ There would be nothing to be done were such a Spinozistic monism to be operative here: Somalia would not be pulverized; life would be concordant, sweet, prolonged, and a beauty to behold. But neither is the relationship between these terms of order one of radical opposition—in which case one term must, in the interests of national integration, be smothered by the other; "the ethnic must be transcended in favour of the ethical," according to Miller's erroneous reading of Fanon's position.⁶⁸ Starting from such a dualist misreading, a better word for the solution of the problem of plural vocabularies in postcolonial existence is not indeed "transcendence" but what Hegel euphemistically called "abstract negation"⁶⁹—that is to say, terminating with extreme prejudice, killing off the other, liquidation.

"Liquidation." That ghastly word—the name for the final solution to the problem of plural terms of identity construed as absolute opposition—does occur in Fanon's account of a certain moment in the process of decolonization and the gestation of the nation state—in Fanon's *description* of a characteristic solution pursued by the "nationalist parties" to the problem at hand: "We have said that the violence of the colonized unifies the people. By its very structure, colonialism is separatist and regionalist. Colonialism does not simply state the existence of tribes; it also reinforces it and separates them. The colonial system encourages chieftaincies and keeps alive the old Marabout confraternities. Violence in its practice is totalizing, na-

tional. It follows that it is closely involved in the liquidation of regionalism and tribalism. Thus, the nationalist parties show no pity at all toward the caids and the customary chiefs. The liquidation of the caids and the chiefs is the preliminary to the unification of the people" (DT, 51; WE, 94: RT). Here is Miller's comment on this passage: "Fanon's response to local resistance is to call out the firing squad."⁷⁰ Really!

Just as we saw Miller transform Fanon's report on the truth-claims of anti-imperialist rhetoric and the moral reasoning of "anti-racist racism" into the author's conclusive doctrine, so he here takes Fanon's narration of the liquidationist policy of the nationalist parties to be representative of Fanon's own solution to the problem of identity and difference. But such a policy of liquidation can result only from the elitist nationalists' understanding of difference as absolute opposition and their rage against its offending manifestations. And it is precisely such an understanding, and the radically antipolitical—because antidialogical—politics it promotes, that Fanon would severely criticize as a delusional and disastrous "voluntarism" (DT, 86: WE, 138). Listen to Fanon, the man whose utterances allegedly betray "the sheer power of a theoretical *truth* to dictate who shall live and who shall be liquidated,"⁷¹ denounce the blindness and violence of Enlightenment nationalism:

The political parties do not manage to implant their organization in the country districts. Instead of using existing structures and giving them a nationalist or progressive character, they mean to destroy living tradition within the framework of the colonial system. They believe it lies in their power to give the initial impulse to the nation, whereas in reality the chains forged by the colonial system still weigh it down heavily. *They are not interested in engaging the mass of the people in a meeting. They do not put their theoretical knowledge at the service of the people;* rather they attempt to guide the people according to an *a priori* scheme . . . The traditional chiefs are ignored, sometimes even persecuted. With a singular lack of scruple *the history of the future nation tramples over the little local histories*, that is to say the only existing national events, whereas what needs to be done is to harmoniously inscribe the history of the village, the history of the traditional conflicts between clans and tribes into the decisive action to which the people have been summoned. (DT, 67–68; WE; 112–113, my emphasis: RT)

The problem here detected is that of the lethal arrogance of "theoretical knowledge" or rather a certain kind of "theoretical knowledge," one fueled by a predatory urge to master difference, to annihilate the troublesome particulars of distinct "portions of the nation" by compelling them to answer to a single unified temporality, to share "the same pace and the same level of enlightenment [*la même allure et . . . le même éclairage*]" (DT, 86–87; WE, 138: RT). What Fanon finds lamentably absent in the Enlightenment nationalist project, what Fanon in consequence calls for, is a "meeting" (*la rencontre*), a dialogical encounter between differing provinces of meaning in the emergent postcolonial world, not a monological assertion and enforcement of an undivided national will. That Fanon's dialectic of experience reports a strategy of "totalizing" violence characteristic of a particular class of social agents does not make him an adherent of totalitarianism, any more than his evocation of the anti-imperialist militant's rhetoric of the true and the good commits him to a doctrinal endorsement of that rhetoric.

It has not indeed escaped the notice of unblushing detractors of "the idiocy of rural life" that, *pace* Miller, Fanon would not have joined shock troops deployed by Enlightenment nationalists to smash into submission all recalcitrant figures of tradition, ethnicity, difference. In a supremely vulgar Marxist work, *New Theories of Revolution*, Jack Woodis once berated Fanon for his alleged "sympathy for the chiefs," a sympathy "linked with his conception of traditional society as the only genuinely national expression in contrast to the modern Western ideas coming from the town."⁷² More recently, in *Black Soul, White Artifact*, Jock McCulloch has read Fanon in turns as a race reductionist (Fanon's pronouncements are "underwritten by the spectre of Negritude") and as a proponent of peasant messianism: "the peasant as the noble savage," McCulloch claims, is Fanon's vision of liberation."⁷³ McCulloch's eyes light up whenever they come upon the mention of class determinations in Fanon's texts. These appear as fleeting scientific epiphanies in the blind alley of ethnophilosophical discourse, episodic gains from which Fanon ultimately retreats in order to rejoin the metaphysical pursuit of "the black soul." Black Orpheus or hired gun of the Enlightenment? Crown prince of logocentric Marxism or votary of a neoprimitivist ethnophilosophy? Poor Fanon: not ethnicist enough for Miller, not ethical enough for McCulloch.

And sometimes much too dialectical for his own good, in the

estimation of Homi Bhabha! Enamored of the Fanon who is “the purveyor of the transgressive and transitional truth,” Bhabha is anxious to stop his sometimes aberrant mentor in his tracks when, driven by a humanist pathos, he unaccountably forgets the “nondialectical” contingencies of his narrative and strains after the universal in a “desperate, doomed search for a dialectic of deliverance.” If only Fanon were free from this “deep hunger for humanism.” If only he kept faith with his own dismal news of the death of “Man” at the hands of colonial violence. Bhabha prefers his Fanon to be a precocious postmodernist who “is not principally posing the question of political oppression as the violation of a human ‘essence.’” Would that Fanon did not lapse “into such a lament in his more existentialist moments.” A consistently postmodernist Fanon would indeed renounce all dreams of restoring the postcolonial subject to some repressed “universality inherent in the human condition.” Life and politics in the postcolonial situation will have to go on, writes this celebrant of shattered ties, unanchored to any “sentimental promise of a humanistic ‘world of the You.’”⁷⁴ There will have to be new formations of social being and civic belonging that cannot be captured by the centralizing, cohering language of the nation and nationalist ideology. Is it not significant that Bhabha reads what Fanon evokes as the occasion of national culture—“this zone of occult instability where the people dwell” (DT, 157; WE, 227)—is it not significant that Bhabha takes this constraining condition of transformative action to be the defining and perhaps the ineliminable way of being in the postcolonial world?⁷⁵

Bhabha’s favorite Fanon would thus bestow retroactive virtue on an imposed necessity, wrest from the colonized subjects’ abjection the secret of their liberty, and find in the inner divisions inflicted upon them the joyful wisdom of an indeterminate identity. From the ironic ambivalence of colonial discourse to the privileged hybridity of the postcolonial subject: this is the narrative plot that Bhabha prefers to see in Fanon’s texts.⁷⁶ The result is a Fanon who has no foundational premises from which to rail, yell, and holler—a Fanon who as a consequence has no ideals to realize.

But this Fanon of the postmodernist imagination, is he *our* Fanon—the Fanon for those who have witnessed the desolation of the world after independence, observed the rights of humanity smothered by the heavy fists of the self-anointed founders, and seen the dream of community wrecked by class predation and ethnic violence?

In the name of what, if we follow the Fanon of the postmodernists, shall we repair the fragments? To what end are we to reinvent the past and remember the future? Come to think of it, by what right can we call this season of disorder by its name? To do any of this, it would seem that we would need for our pathfinder a somewhat different Fanon. This will be a Fanon who did indeed frame his account of the colonial condition and its aftermath in the language of human possibilities; a Fanon in whom this humanist vocabulary was by no means an occasional lapse from the sturdy posture of a sophisticated nihilism; a Fanon for whom the *raison d'être* of racial and national liberation was that it would "give back their dignity to all citizens, fill their minds and feast their eyes with *human things*, and create a prospect that is human because conscious and sovereign persons dwell therein" (DT, 139; WE, 205, my emphasis: RT). Such a Fanon will not indeed be ethnicist enough for Miller, modernist enough for McCulloch, or postmodern enough for Bhabha. Could it be that to be charged with mutually exclusive failings is the surest sign of a thinker's originality? Christopher Miller calls the author of *The Wretched of the Earth* "the idiosyncratic Fanon."⁷⁷ He is right.

2

IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE

When you apprehend the colonial context in its immediacy, it is evident that what parcels out this world is, in the first place, the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species.

—FRANTZ FANON, *The Wretched of the Earth*

The knowledge or knowing which is at the start or is immediately our object cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply *is*. Our approach to the object must also be *immediate* or receptive; we must alter nothing in the object as it presents itself. In *apprehending* it, we must refrain from trying to *comprehend* it.

—G. W. F. HEGEL, *Phenomenology of Spirit*

One settler, one bullet.

—Slogan of the PanAfricanist Congress of South Africa

HISTORY AS ANTIDIALECTIC

The Wretched of the Earth opens with an unforgettable image of revolution as a cataclysmic event, an act of redemptive violence that comes instantaneously yet inexorably to avenge and extirpate a radical evil. This text, which takes its title from the song of the movement inspired by Marx and Engels, begins by renouncing the founders' intention to trace the lineage of the coming revolution to "the history of all hitherto existing society." "Concerning Violence," its first chapter, appears to give short shrift to world-historical reason, preferring instead to capture this moment in time, this act of insurrection, in all its convulsive immediacy and irreducible uniqueness:

At whatever level we study it . . . decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain "species" of human beings by another "species" of human beings. Without any period of transition, there is a total, complete, and absolute substitution. It is true that we could

equally well stress the rise of a new nation, the setting up of a new state, its diplomatic relations, and its economic and political trends. But we have precisely chosen to speak of that kind of *tabula rasa* which characterizes at the outset all decolonization. Its unusual importance is that it constitutes, from the very first day, the minimum demands of the colonized. To tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from bottom up. *The extraordinary importance of this change is that it is willed, called for, demanded.* (DT, 5; WE, 35, my emphasis: RT)

What Francis Jeanson said of Fanon's vision of transcendence in *Black Skin, White Masks* would appear to be equally true of the language of these opening pages of his last work: "*cette exigence totale et totalement irréductible à l'Histoire* [this demand that is total, and totally irreducible to History]."¹ The revolution against racial and colonial subjugation is precisely such an unheralded but inescapable outcome of pure conation, something "willed, called for, demanded."

What must the experience of human bondage be like in order to give rise to this manifestly unbridled voluntarism in the rhetoric of revolutionary agency? What manner of apprehending history would yield this radical catastrophism in the representation of social transformation?

In a brief and tantalizing aside, the authors of *The German Ideology* turn into interlocutors of their own teaching. Could it be, Marx and Engels wonder aloud, that "this whole conception of history" as "a coherent series" of forms of productive activity and deciduous transformations, could it be that this entire edifice of historicist developmentalism is "contradicted by the fact of conquest"?² "Up till now violence, war, pillage, murder and robbery, etc., have been accepted as the driving force of history . . . Nothing is more common than the notion that in history up till now it has only been a question of *taking*. The barbarians *take* the Roman Empire, and this fact of taking is made to explain the transition from the old order to the feudal system."³ The manifest data of historical experience, Marx and Engels here confess, make a conquest theory of social transformation quite plausible, indeed viscerally seductive. But that temptation must be resisted. The originality of the materialist interpretation of history resides in the rejection of "taking" as the first cause of historical change:

In this taking by barbarians, however, the question is whether the nation which is conquered has evolved industrial productive forces, as is the case with modern peoples, or whether its productive forces are based for the most part merely on their concentration and on the community. Taking is further determined by the object taken. A banker's fortune, consisting of paper, cannot be taken at all without the taker's submitting to the conditions of production and intercourse of the country taken. Similarly the total industrial capital of a modern industrial country. And finally, everywhere there is very soon an end to taking, and when there is nothing more to take, you have to set about producing.⁴

In a momentous reordering of historical explanation—its functional equivalent in psychoanalysis is Freud's repudiation of the seduction hypothesis—historical materialism will henceforth reject the fact of conquest as the paramount cause of the historical drama, and indeed as a central object of critical discourse.⁵

"Concerning Violence" picks up this discarded object of historical knowledge and restores it to narrative prominence. Challenging *The German Ideology*, but also the *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Fanon's text dramatically assigns causal primacy to the political event, in the shape of violent conquest, in the constitution of social reality. It is to this political fact, this conquest institutionalized in the "colonial system," that "the colonizer owes the very fact of his existence, that is to say, his property" (DT, 6; WE, 36). There is an evident parody of the *Preface* here: property relations, and an entire universe of social, juridical, and symbolic practices and transactions, as consequences of a precipitate event of conquest and political domination; in brief, history as antidialectic.

Accordingly, the kind of temporality that defines historical change in this universe will be more like the abruptness that, as Foucault would have it, characterizes certain transformations in regimes of discourse and forms of knowledge.⁶ Wrenching the story of revolution from the sobrieties of developmentalist historicism, "Concerning Violence" reduces it to a simple and visceral response to alien domination. If national liberation appears to be such an uncompromising act of restitutive justice, this is because the colonial order it seeks to overthrow presents itself as a wholly irruptive, disruptive, and oppressive experience; an event which presages no progress, no

developmental processes, no redeeming transformations born of the dehiscence of a society's organic possibilities at the instigation of alien agencies. On this view, colonialism is nothing but what *Black Skin, White Masks* calls an "absurd drama" (PN, 180; BS, 197): "an absurd drama" of radical rupture which must be ended, which can only be ended, by an equally "radical decision" on the part of the dominated community to "remove from it its heterogeneity" (DT, 13; WE, 46), to exorcise from itself processes and practices forced upon it and inconsonant with its native necessities. The revolutionary catastrophism of the opening paragraphs of the text is the result of this refusal of a dialectical understanding of colonial history. Where others read revolutionary practice as a transformative eliciting of immanent meanings, Fanon appears to envision the violent insurrectionary jettisoning of an alien text, relishing the exacting prospect of a new beginning, an original writing upon a slate wiped clean [*table rase*] of the conqueror's Word.

Thus construed as restitutive justice, as the reconquest by a people of its authorial responsibility, decolonization is "a program of complete disorder" (DT, 6; WE, 36); it is an avenging repetition of an order of historical experience which, by virtue of its tradition of forcible interruptions and discontinuities, constitutes a challenge to organicist developmentalism as a mode of historical understanding. The canonical vocabulary of *the dialectics of transition* is rudely set aside here: "Without any period of transition, there is a total, complete and absolute substitution." Likewise set aside is the humble language of maieutics, in which the future world and those who will people it are conventionally invoked. Rather, we are here witnesses to a cosmogonic event, present at the creation: "Decolonization is the veritable creation of a new humanity" (DT, 6; WE, 36: RT). In this sense decolonization, once more, is an exercise in revolution as repetition, "un juste retour des choses" (DT, 12; WE, 43); it merely inverts—with vengeful laughter in the eyes of its protagonists—the metaphysics and metaphors of imperialism according to which the colonizer is the demiurge: "The colonizer makes history; his life is an epic, an Odyssey. He is the absolute beginning: 'This land was created by us'; he is the unceasing cause! 'If we leave, all is lost, and this land will return to the Middle Ages'" (DT, 17; WE, 51: RT). To hear "Concerning Violence" tell it, the colonial project and anticolonial nationalism—kindred versions of a Manichean discourse—deploy identical rhetorics of cause, time, and action in the service of

antithetical claims. Conspicuously absent from this rhetorical structure are the characteristic tropes of dialectical knowledge. There are here no processes, no inner necessities generating transitions, contradictions, mediations, developments, and transformations. Rather, we are confronted with a universe of invasive and insurrectionary acts, binary oppositions, caesuras, and radical decisions.

Had "Concerning Violence" said no more than this, had this been its first and last word on the event of subjugation and the time of liberation, it would indeed be an exemplary instance of what a Hayden White might recognize as the *antinarrativist* text: that mode of discourse which White, keen detective of political motives in the formal procedures of historical representation, sees as marked by a refusal to elicit organic, immanent, and redemptive meaning from its harrowing vision of the historical event as horror, nightmare, and "sublime spectacle."⁷

But what is remarkable about this text, with its seemingly supercilious repudiation of dialectical reason, is that it is able to avow and to name the horizon that constrains and enables its speech. And it does so at the very moment when it questions the competence of the Marxist version of dialectical discourse to account for the "colonial context":

This world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species. The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. *When you apprehend the colonial context in its immediacy*, it is evident that what parcels out the world is, in the first place, the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies the economic substructure is also the superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. That is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem. (DT, 9; WE, 39-40, my emphasis: RT)

This entire antinarrativist manner of living and reliving the colonial event and the insurrection it invites, the text tells us, is what presents itself to consciousness, "quand on aperçoit *dans son immédiateté* le contexte colonial," "when you apprehend the colonial context *in its immediacy*."⁸ In so doing, in testifying to its *perspectivism*, the text disavows any claim to be legislating some general propositions con-

cerning the structure of social being and the motive forces of history. It thereby implicitly attests to its constraints, its limits, its silences. It owns up to the possibility that, however situationally privileged and provisionally legitimate it may be, the horizon of immediacy is, in the Lukácsian language of feminist-standpoint epistemology—here invoked to characterize a different order of human experience—partial and perverse.⁹ Partial and perverse in its reading of historical and social reality. For in contrast to feminist-standpoint epistemology, whose foundational revisionism asserts the superiority of women's account of reality achieved by virtue of the historical universals and necessities of the "sex-gender system," Fanon suggests that the account of reality generated by the historical particulars and contingencies of the colonial-racial system possesses profoundly ambiguous virtues. If it is true that all oppressed groups, according to Alison Jaggar, are constrained to criticize "accepted interpretations of the world" and to develop "new and less distorted ways of understanding the world,"¹⁰ then the specific epistemic gains won by the social consciousness of the colonized (as Fanon hints) may in their immediacy constitute a problematic victory. Colonizers as race supremacists naturalize the historical world and people it with "two species," Black and White, reduced to atemporal essences. The oppressed, in their turn, live and perceive the collectivity constructed by the "simplifying" or reductive practices of the colonizers through the prism of what Paulin Hountondji has called the "unanamist illusion."¹¹ For the one, essence precedes existence. For the other, existence decrees essence, an essence innocent of discrete particulars. Heir to the "primary Manicheism" of the colonizer as race supremacist, a resistant racial consciousness pledged to the standpoint of immediacy remains, even as it contests the colonizer's version of truth, partial and perverse in its understanding of the social world. Partial and perverse because it sees only unity and identity and is blind to difference, blind to the differential social relations of the colonial regime, blind to the complex social text of the "colonial context."

Such an internal scrutiny, I have suggested, is made possible by the amphibious formal identity of the text—its ability to stage a certain perspective, a certain scene and action of the plot in the guise of a declarative discourse. Thanks to this formal characteristic, Fanon's narrative can give credence to the *apprehension* of a historical object in its immediate mode of appearance, and yet prepare us for a

comprehension of this object—that is to say, a fuller knowledge of its appearance *and* its conditions of intelligibility. This distinction, profoundly indebted to the narrative standpoint of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*,¹² is adumbrated in the very second paragraph of "Concerning Violence." There we are offered an instant revision of the initial picture of decolonization as "a program of absolute disorder," an *indeterminate negation*, so to speak, of the colonial order:

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, *as we can see* [*on le voit*], a program of absolute disorder. But it cannot come as a result of a magical operation, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding. Decolonization, *as we know* [*on le sait*], is a *historical process*: that is to say that it cannot be comprehended [*ne peut être comprise*], it cannot find its intelligibility nor become transparent to itself except in the exact measure that we discern the movement of historical becoming [*le mouvement historicisant*] which gives it form and content. (DT, 6; WE, 36, my emphasis: RT)

We have here an exemplary instance of the text acting as an interlocutor of its own representational claims, questioning its own depiction of history as the radical reversal of a brute facticity by the abrupt intervention of a collective will—history as an act without a process, an instantaneous event unconstrained by any determinate antecedents save for the grim confrontation of two "species" of humanity, the colonizer and the colonized. It is as though by virtue of this internal, prefigurative critique of immediate knowledge—with its dualism of a paralyzing objectivity and a resurrected subjectivity, and of two unitary and undifferentiated collectivities—it is as though Fanon's text wanted thereby to follow Sartre's project: "to describe that strange reality, History, which is neither objective, nor ever quite subjective, in which the dialectic is contested, penetrated, and corroded by a *kind of antidialectic*, but which is still a dialectic."¹³

It is important to bear this in mind when we reread the famous last sentence of the celebrated passage: "*That is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem.*" This concluding recommendation has been generally construed as a programmatic utterance—overly coy in the circumstances—necessitated by the propositional force of the clauses which precede it: those clauses in which the text, in a revisionist gesture toward the *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of*

Political Economy, asserts the determination in the first and last instance of political power, as a function of racial membership, in the structuring of relations of inequality. But what if the famous concluding sentence is not exactly an inference drawn from an unedited factual report? What if the antecedent of this inference is not solely the set of principal clauses which claim the primacy of the race structure to be an indubitable fact, but rather these principal clauses together with the subordinate clause that asks us to consider what the social world looks like when it is apprehended “in its immediacy”? What if the last sentence, then, invites us not so much to honor an incontestable objective reality and to revise or jettison a canonical doctrine in the light of that reality, but rather to suspend a metatheoretical judgment in the face of a compelling perspectival circumstance? What if the concluding utterance is not entirely a conclusive programmatic prescription? Would we not, in that case, have to wonder about the plausibility of some version of “Marxist analysis” in a context other than that of immediate knowledge?

I have extrapolated self-critical questions such as these from linguistic and dramaturgical signals posted by the text. But there is no gainsaying the fact that the text also invites us to honor what Fanon elsewhere calls “a consciousness pledged to experience” (PN, 128; BS, 134). Let us permit ourselves, then, to be detained by this antidialectical horizon of immediacy, for it has compelling if partial truths to tell. By its lights we are able to take the measure of human abjection at the extreme limits of the colonial condition. Is it not here—if we revisit the world of *Black Skin, White Masks* with the guidance of the words of *The Wretched of the Earth*—that the young Fanon thought he had discerned that “zone of non-being, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born” (PN, 26; BS, 10)? Perhaps it is only by heeding the call of immediacy that we can “accomplish that descent into real hell” without which a visionary politics of radical emancipation loses something of its urgency.¹⁴ In the ensuing sections of this chapter, then, I would like to explore in greater detail how this collusion with history-lived-as-an-antidialectic generates a certain representation of the colonizer-colonized relation throughout Fanon’s texts in light of the paradigmatic formulation given in the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*. And I would like to do so by reenacting the differentiations which Fanon’s texts, heeding the evidence of “immediate experience,” stage between the particulars of

the racial drama and archetypes of human bondage and freedom in the texts of Hegel, Sartre, and Marx.

ARISTOTLE AS WITNESS

Pairs of opposites which are contraries are not in any way interdependent, but are contrary one to the other. The good is not spoken of as the good of the bad, but as the contrary of the bad, nor is the white spoken of as the white of the black, but as the contrary of the black.

—ARISTOTLE, *Categories*

I am suspicious of dialectics.

—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, Letter to Georg Brandes

“Concerning Violence” paraphrases Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and parodies his *Logic*. While it learns from Hegel’s narrative how to honor and to suspect the standpoint of immediate knowledge, it seems incongruously unwilling to assent to the logico-ontological propositions that in Hegel’s system authorize this strategic solicitude and this ultimate suspicion. For it is not only the Marxist version of dialectical reasoning which, according to the famous formulation, the text asks to be “slightly stretched”; it appears to go after Hegel himself. As when the young Marx, in a hilariously sardonic response to the mystifying reconciliations of Hegel’s “allegory” of mediation, says, “Real extremes cannot be mediated precisely because they are real extremes. Nor do they require mediation, for they are opposed in essence. They have nothing in common, they do not need each other, they do not supplement each other,”¹⁵ so Fanon’s text here tells us that our most truthful witness to the colonial context, to the defining logic of the colonizer-colonized relation, is not Hegel but Aristotle: “The zone where the colonized live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the colonizers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous” (DT, 8; WE, 38–39; RT). Hegel is not directly named in this passage. Nevertheless, it is evident that the text here reenacts a debate with Hegel that goes back to “The Negro and Hegel” in *Black Skin, White Masks* (PN, 195–200; BS, 216–222). There Fanon considers the celebrated fable of recognition in the *Phenomenology* and

questions its applicability to the colonial-racial system of mastery and bondage.

What is it about this paradigmatic narrative which "The Negro and Hegel" finds alien to its universe of discourse and which would lead "Concerning Violence" to invoke Aristotle's logic as a more apposite account of the colonial relation? Simply—and tautologically—put: the fact that Hegel's narrative is *dialectical* in its configuration of the origins, subsequent transformation, and eventual outcome of the story of intersubjectivity. The *Phenomenology* narrates a history of recognition whose governing principle, made manifest even in the relation of mastery and bondage, is *reciprocity*. Reciprocity is at once the foundational promise of human intercourse and the ironic outcome of its deformation. True, the plot structure revises Hegel's earlier account of desire presented in the fragment entitled "Love": "True union or love proper exists only between living beings who are alike in power and thus in one another's eyes living beings from every point of view; in no respect is either dead for the other."¹⁶ Such a cozy consensualism is no longer sustainable by a philosophical anthropology chastened by the dismal science of Hobbes. What the *Phenomenology* will not jettison is the premise of reciprocity, now rendered antecedent and transcendent to the history of subjugation and inequality: reciprocity as the pristine promise of the human association in *all* its modulations.

So it is that at the origin of the encounter between his *dramatis personae*, Hegel places a scene of "the pure Notion of recognition" consisting in "the double movement of the two self-consciousnesses": "Each sees the *other* do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as the other does the same. Action by one side only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both . . . Each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself, and each is for itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another."¹⁷ Presently, "the process of the pure Notion of recognition" will come to "exhibit the side of the inequality of the two, or the splitting-up of the middle term into the extremes which, as extremes, are opposed to one another, one being only *recognized*, the other only *recognizing*."¹⁸

This is the momentous consequence of the "life-and-death struggle" which "the two self-conscious individuals" must undergo in order that they may "raise the certainty of being *for themselves* to truth, both in the case of the other and in their own case." In a famous passage which Fanon would recall, Hegel affirms the necessity of violence for the process of individuation and self-authentication: "And it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness its essential being is not [just] being, not the *immediate* form in which it appears, not its submergence in the expanse of life, but rather that there is nothing present in it which could not be regarded as a vanishing moment, that it is only pure *being-for-self*. The individual who has not risked his life may well be recognized as a *person*, but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness."¹⁹ The result of this violent confrontation, however, cannot be the death of one partner and the survival of the other. The death of one participant would eliminate the possibility of recognition demanded by the other. Hegel therefore calls such an outcome "an abstract negation, not the negation coming from consciousness, which supersedes in such a way as to preserve and maintain what is superseded, and consequently survives its own supersession." The *dialectical* outcome of the "trial by death," then, is not liquidation but the "dissolution of that simple unity" that characterized the original being of self-consciousness and its encounter with another self-consciousness. And the consequence of this dissolution is that "there is posited a pure self-consciousness, and a consciousness which is not purely for itself but for another, i.e. is a merely *immediate* consciousness, or consciousness in the form of *thinghood* . . . The former is lord, the other is bondsman."²⁰

But if domination occurs as an inexorable consequence of humanity's self-formation, Hegel insists that a radically dualistic mode of difference—one in which the two agents are not only unequal but "exist as two opposed shapes of consciousness"—cannot be sustained: "But for recognition proper the moment is lacking, that what the lord does to the other he also does to himself, and what the bondsman does to himself *he* should also do to the other. The outcome is a recognition that is one-sided and unequal."²¹ The offended god of reciprocity must now be avenged, but not through a simple restoration of the erstwhile relation of complementarity, a

simple return to the "pure Notion of recognition." Rather, the act of expiation and restitution will take the form of an ironic transformation of roles.

For one thing, the victorious master confronts an "existential impasse": he is nothing without the slave; well, not much. "In this recognition the unessential consciousness is for the lord the object, which constitutes the *truth* of his certainty of himself. But it is clear that this object does not correspond to its Notion, but rather the object in which the lord has achieved his lordship has in reality turned out to be something quite different from an independent consciousness. What now really confronts him is not an independent consciousness, but a dependent one. He is, therefore, not certain of *being-for-self* as truth of himself. On the contrary, his truth is in reality the unessential consciousness and its unessential action."²² Nor is this all. The bondsman undergoes a reformation by virtue of his servile work. Was it not due to the fear of death and the love of life, mere life, that the slave succumbed to the master in the struggle for recognition? Now vanquished, he is compelled to work for the master. But in so doing the slave "rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and gets rid of it by working on it."²³ Whereas the idle master consumes what he has not produced, the slave fashions with his labor something enduring, accomplishing thereby a surreptitious triumph over death: independence lost and regained. The product of the slave's "formative activity" becomes irrefutable testimony to his autonomy. "Through this rediscovery of himself by himself, the bondsman realizes that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own."²⁴ The transcendence of mere natural existence and the consciousness of freedom are no longer the special prerogative of the idle master but a human universal predicated on the norm of intersubjective reciprocity.

"The Negro and Hegel" underscores the telic primacy of the norm of reciprocity in Hegel's paradigmatic fable of recognition: "At the foundation of Hegelian dialectic there is an absolute reciprocity which must be emphasized" (PN, 196; BS, 217). "Absolute reciprocity." This is the condition of possibility of the surreptitious solidarity which binds the two protagonists in peace and in war, of the inadvertent reversal of roles they undergo in the aftermath of the trial by death, and of the ironic independence which the bondsman achieves by virtue of his work. And it is precisely this founding

principle and its dialectical consequences which, according to Fanon, are conspicuous by their primordial absence in the colonial-racial system of domination. Neither in the primal encounter of our two collective subjects, nor in the subsequent history of antagonism, nor in the work of the subjugated does Fanon's text detect any immanent redemptive possibilities. We are in an entirely different universe of discourse.

I hope I have shown that here the master differs basically from the master described by Hegel. For Hegel there is reciprocity; here the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work.

In the same way, the slave here is in no way identifiable with the slave who loses himself in the object and finds in his work the source of his liberation.

The Negro wants to be like the master.

Therefore he is less independent than the Hegelian slave.

In Hegel the slave turns away from the master and turns toward the object.

Here the slave turns toward the master and abandons the object.

(PN, 199; BS, 220-221)

In a willful misreading of the history of resistance and insurrection under plantation slavery, Fanon's text reduces the condition of the black subject to one of enforced passivity. The will to violence is here tamed by the unilateral action of the master. "There is not an open conflict," writes Fanon, "between white and black. One day the White Master, *without conflict*, recognized the Negro slave" (PN, 196; BS, 217). Again: "Historically, the Negro steeped in the inessentiality of servitude was set free by his master. He did not fight for his freedom" (PN, 198; BS, 219). An emancipation proclamation suddenly promoted "the machine-animal-man to the supreme rank of *men*." The consequence? "The upheaval reached the Negroes from without. The black was acted upon. Values that had not been created by his actions, values that had not been born of the systolic tide of his blood, danced in a hued whirl round him. The upheaval did not make a difference. He went from one way of life to another, but not from one life to another . . . The former slave, who can find in his memory no trace of the struggle for liberty or of that anguish of liberty of which Kierkegaard speaks, sits unmoved before the young white man singing and dancing on the tightrope of existence"

(PN, 198–199; BS, 220–221). That the emancipation was solely the master's deed simply reiterates the monological character of action in the black-white encounter. Not Hegel's bondsman but Nietzsche's slave is the prototype of the black subject.

Curiously, Fanon's interpreters have viewed this portrait as either a faithful successor version or an impoverished copy of the Hegelian archetype. In a suggestive attempt to show the continuing relevance of Hegel's teaching, Trent Schroyer—basing his reading more on *The Wretched of the Earth* than on *Black Skin, White Masks*—describes Fanon's analysis as a contemporary restatement of Hegel's "socio-cultural interpretation of lordship and bondage."²⁵ On the other hand, Renate Zahar argues that "colonialist domination and enslavement," the subject of Fanon's narrative, "are a new historical form of the relationship between master and slave analyzed by Hegel."²⁶ Only, Fanon leaves out of his account "the element in the Hegelian theory which alone makes the emancipation of the slave possible, namely the process of material labor," replacing it with "the political process of emancipation through violence." On this view, Fanon ignores "the economic derivation" of colonial alienation.²⁷ By contrast, Irene Gendzier recognizes in Fanon's account the category of work. Yet this is not the redemptive work of Hegel's bondsman, but the wholly abject labor of the servant. Fanon, according to this thesis, "may have been reflecting on the utter disdain in which the white master held the black servant, a disdain so totally destructive that it seemed to obviate any consideration of the servant, save as a labor-producing machine."²⁸ Gendzier muses that this is the result of the "non-philosophic sense" in which Fanon understood the category of labor.²⁹

But this is not unlike shooting the messenger! A normative but frustrated Hegelian-Marxist in many aspects of his implicit social ontology, Fanon quite evidently subscribed to the view of value attributes which that tradition ascribes to human work, even the work of the bondsman. This much is attested by Fanon's reference to the Hegelian slave "who loses himself in the object and finds in his work the source of his liberation." But it is precisely this normative Left-Hegelianism that leads him to discern in the drama of labor and interaction under conditions of racial bondage an entirely different, indeed heterogeneous, story. A loyal revisionist, Fanon suggests that an experience of labor disjoined from the pristine promise of reciprocal recognition is incapable of engendering the possibility of

liberation. There is something far worse here, Fanon's text suggests, than the alienation of labor dramatized by Marx in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. There the prospect of human self-realization and emancipation through work is *perverted* under capitalist relations of production. "Under these economic conditions this realisation of labour appears as *loss of realisation* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object and bondage to it*."³⁰ Call it a *deformed dialectic*. "Here," Fanon writes contrastively of his universe of discourse, "the slave turns toward the master and *abandons the object*." A catachresis might best name *this* story of labor and interaction: *aborted dialectic*.

Nothing, on this view, redeems the "inessentiality" of the racially subjugated by virtue of an *immanent necessity*. That is why their liberation will have to take a form altogether different from that of Hegel's slave. The story of Hegel's bondsman ends with a *refiguration* of his existential vocation. In contrast to this reformism, the emancipation of the racially subjugated will have to be nothing less than a *transfiguration*, a radical leap "from one life to another." Construing the colonial condition on the model of the abject captivity to which the plantation slave was allegedly condemned, "Concerning Violence" sees in decolonization an epiphany, a portentous event in the history of "being":

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed for *it has an effect on being* [elle porte sur l'être], it changes being fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, caught in a spectacular manner by the floodlights of History. It introduces into being a peculiar rhythm, heralded by new people, a new language, a new humanity. Decolonization is a veritable creation of new human beings. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power: the colonized "thing" becomes human during the same process by which it frees itself. (DT, 6; WE, 36-37, my emphasis: RT)

Nothing could contrast so starkly with the story of liberation which Hegel's dialectic enables the *Phenomenology* to tell than this image of the radical regeneration of "being." It is tempting, for this reason, to see Fanon's portrait of the colonizer-colonized relation as derived from the dismal theory of human interaction set forth by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* and the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. It would seem that Fanon's rhetoric of "the violence which has ruled

over the ordering of the colonial world" (DT, 9; WE, 40) is but a more sanguinary restatement of Sartre's account of human intercourse, or, worse, an endorsement of Sartre's "phenomenology of social violence" perverted, according to William Leon McBride, into a "romantic glorification of violence for its own sake."³¹

But if the strategic reading of "The Negro and Hegel" and "Concerning Violence" I have offered above is at all plausible, then both texts would seem to suggest that not only Hegel's narrative but successor narratives of social being predicated on relations of reciprocity, benign or malignant, are incapable of capturing "the originality of the colonial context." Sartre's narrative, likewise, is incapable of this.

It may be recalled that in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre declares Hegel's solution to the problem of "the existence of others" to be unsatisfactory. He is concerned to "marshal against Hegel a twofold charge of optimism": an "epistemological optimism" and an "ontological optimism" parallel to it.³² Sartre will have nothing to do with the dialectical teleology which requires that the struggle for human recognition should terminate in a mutual disclosure, by self and other, of universal value and objective truth, an intersubjectivity of knowledge and action. Sartre asserts in response to Hegel that: "No universal knowledge can be derived from the relations of consciousnesses. This is what we call their ontological separation."³³ Hegel's was but a futile project of covering "the scandal of the plurality of consciousness" with a "logical or epistemological optimism," an attempt to realize a "totalitarian and unifying synthesis of 'Others.'"

For Sartre, there is no ontologically primary experience of a "we-subject," since it is the inalienable vocation of each human being, each consciousness, to seek to transcend (the freedom of) another human being: "We should hope in vain for a human 'we' in which the intersubjective totality would obtain consciousness of itself as a unified subjectivity."³⁴ Far from being a fundamental structure of "human reality," such an intersubjectivity is but a fleeting "psychological experience realized by an historic man." The Heideggerian category of the *Mitsein* ("Being-with") is, according to Sartre, no more ontologically predicative of human reality than the Hegelian concept of reciprocal recognition. Coexistence is not, as Heidegger supposed, "equiprimordial with Being-in-the-world."³⁵ For Sartre the "essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not the *Mitsein*; it is conflict."³⁶

Sartre's universe is a Hobbesian universe. Yet, more precisely, for this very reason, the principle of reciprocity is *not* banished from it. But reciprocity here constitutes a "negative relation" between human beings, condemning them to a "detotalized totality" of experience. To be sure, an egalitarian structure of intersubjectivity is a chimerical ideal: "we shall never place ourselves concretely on a plane of equality; that is, on the plane where the recognition of the Other's freedom would involve the Other's recognition of our freedom."³⁷ But there is available here a dreadful equality of mutual sabotage, frustration, domination, and violence remarkably reminiscent of the equality of insecurity and terror which Hobbes adduced as the justification for a self-perpetuating sovereign. In his own perverse manner of standing Hegel on his head, Sartre retains an essential feature of the Hegelian paradigm of human interaction: the possibility of a mutual exchange of roles among the participants. If human beings are incapable of ever recognizing one another as subjects bound together by relations of complementarity, they have an equal capacity, albeit doomed to mutual frustration, of attempting to transform one another into *objects*. It is because human beings possess this demonic power equally and are capable of deploying it reciprocally that Sartre considers the danger of domination, alienation, and reification to be not a "historical result" or an accident which is "capable of being surmounted" but rather "the permanent structure" of human interaction.³⁸ Human intercourse is a cyclical experience of mastery and bondage: no one has an enduring privilege of lordship; no one is condemned to a perpetual burden of servitude.

Sartre's dramatic archetype for this circle of autonomy and heteronomy, this ceaseless alteration of triumphant subjectivity and the shame of reification, is the famous phenomenon of the "Look."³⁹ Caught in the act by the piercing look of the Other, I experience an assault upon my liberty which was constitutionally sovereign in its projects and possibilities. I am endowed with a character, a nature, with objectivity. Suddenly, from being that restless lack of being, that prodigious nothingness which is the ontological structure of the *for-itself*—suddenly, writes Sartre, "I *am* somebody." My human reality is henceforth robbed of its protean possibilities; it is now a "degraded, fixed, dependent being." This "objectivation" of my being is therefore the occasion for "a radical metamorphosis" in the primordial structure of human reality.⁴⁰ It is, nevertheless, a reversible experience. What is the basis for this reversibility?

It is the ontological structure of the for-itself which secures the possibility for undoing the domination and reification inflicted by the existence of others. For it is the unimpaired prerogative of the for-itself to "assume," hence to refuse, its degradation into "object-ness." Hegel said of the process of human recognition that "action from one side only would be useless, because what is to happen can only be brought about by means of both"; and Sartre's phenomenology of reification and its transcendence is reminiscent of Hegel's theory—and consistent with his own fundamental ontology. Thus, he holds that the negation of my freedom or transcendence by the Other is reciprocated by a "second negation, the one which proceeds from me."⁴¹ In short, I can in my turn look at the Other, make an object out of him, and put *his* possibilities out of play. Sartre has dismissed Hegel's dialectic of reciprocity as totalitarian; he has vetoed the "epistemological optimism" which dreams of an experiential totality shared by the ego and the Other; but he has, upon the foundations of his own ontology, proposed a *negative dialectic of reciprocity* which requires that the "dependent consciousness" be capable of transcending its reduction to the status of a thing by exchanging roles with the "independent consciousness." Sartre's account of "concrete relations with others," his evocation of the tragicomedies of love, hate, masochism, and sadism, is an elaboration of this eternal dance of involuntary freedom and willed servitude which is, according to him, the inalienable mark of the human condition.

Of this irreducible role of reciprocity in human transactions the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is a monumental orchestration. In a renewed debate with Hegel, Sartre is concerned to exhibit "the disquiet of reciprocity,"⁴² not its disappearance; and to make it abundantly clear, if any doubt still remained, that "reciprocity, though completely opposed to alienation and reification, does not save men from them."⁴³ In short, he wants to insist that reciprocity should not be confused with perpetual peace. The hidden Kantianism of Hegel's doctrine of mutual recognition must be refused: "We must not suppose that we have entered the kingdom of ends and that, in reciprocity, everyone recognizes and treats the Other as an absolute end."⁴⁴ On this view, there is no transcendental standard of "pure reciprocity" of which the relationship of mastery and bondage constitutes a tragic manifestation. And Sartre would invoke the idea of "pure reciprocity" only with a sardonic intent—that is to say, in order to demonstrate its historical and ontological conditions of

impossibility. More precisely, his historical explanation of "the impossibility of coexistence" owes its "dialectical intelligibility" to atemporal ontological postulates.⁴⁵ The principal terms of the ontological argument deployed by the *Critique* are practically lifted from *Being and Nothingness*. Now as before, the defining properties of the human condition are those of "need," "lack," "lacuna," "negation."⁴⁶

There is, however, a novel category that would seem to introduce the place of contingency and impermanence into these grim constancies of the human situation. And that category is *scarcity*. Sartre's version of scarcity, it turns out, is as invariable as that of his Hobbesian and liberal precursors. A being in need (*l'homme de besoin*) interacts with another being in need in a harsh world of scarcity. Sartre declares emphatically: "*There is not enough for everybody.*"⁴⁷ Consequently, human beings are condemned to know the norm of reciprocity only in its pathological form: "In pure reciprocity, that which is Other than me *is also the same*. But in reciprocity as *modified by scarcity*, the same appears to us as anti-human in so far as *this same man* appears as radically Other—that is to say, as threatening us with death."⁴⁸ Under the sway of dire necessity, each person confronts the Other as belonging to "*another species*," which is to say as "our demonic double"; for "it is impossible for *all* those bound by reciprocal links to stay on the soil which supports and feeds them." The action of each person must be aimed at undoing the action and freedom of the Other. "Interiorised scarcity" is therefore "the basic abstract matrix of every reification of human relations in any society," the material foundation for "the constitution of radical evil and of Manicheism." In a world in which every person is necessarily the "surplus man," human intercourse is characterized by reciprocal *violence*. Far from being a degenerate condition of social existence or even a necessary means for the reconstitution of political life, violence is for Sartre nothing less than "a structure of human action under the sway of Manicheism and in a context of scarcity," a testimony to "the unbearable fact of broken reciprocity and of the systematic exploitation of man's humanity for the destruction of the human."⁴⁹

Manicheism, violence, the reduction of the human being to a thing by the look and action of another human being; or the condemnation of the Other to the status of a dreaded or spurned "surplus" entity: these and other characteristic figures in Sartre's account of being-for-

others reappear in Fanon's representation of the racial drama of the "colonial context," most memorably in that lacerating evocation of the hounded consciousness, "The Lived Experience of the Black Person [*L'expérience vécue du Noir*]," the fifth chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*.⁵⁰ "Dirty nigger!" Or simply, 'Look, a nigger!' I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects" (PN, 108; BS, 109). These words echo Sartre's characterization of the "radical metamorphosis" which the presence and action of the Other effect in a being destined to be free: "The for-itself when alone transcends the world; it is the nothing by which *there are* things. The Other by rising up confers on the for-itself a being-in-itself-in-the-midst-of-the-world as a thing among things."⁵¹ But consider the interpersonal character and cyclical reciprocity of Sartre's portrait of reification, as against the intercollectivity and the norm of irreiprocity that define Fanon's schema. It may be retorted that Sartre's phenomenology is cognizant of a collective experience of being reduced to the status of things, and that Fanon's critical analysis is eminently illustrative of the phenomenon of "*The Us-Object*" in which the look and action of a third person (*The Third*) precipitate the self and the Other into a shared experience of shame and alienation, making of the individual "an object in a community of objects."⁵² Sartre indeed understands that such a collective experience of reification represents "a still more radical alienation on the part of the For-itself since the latter is no longer compelled only to assume what it is for the Other but to assume also a totality which it is not although it forms an integral part of it." Of those human situations "more favourable to the upsurge of the 'Us,'" Sartre cites the experience of belonging to an oppressed class. To the latter, the oppressing class appears as a "perpetual Third." And as a result of "the privileges of the Third," I, as a member of the oppressed class, "experience my being-looked-at-as-a-thing-engaged-in-a-totality-of-things."⁵³

Yet for all its coerciveness and the monstrous depersonalization which it signifies, the experience of the us-object is, according to Sartre, "only a more complex modality" of being-for-others. Like the reification caused by interpersonal relations, the us-object contains a structural possibility of "disintegration." The "Us," writes Sartre, "collapses as soon as the for-itself reclaims its selfness in the face of

the Third and looks at him in turn." Not only can individual selfness be recovered, but by *assuming* a class consciousness a member of the oppressed class undertakes "the project of freeing the whole 'Us' from the object-state by transforming it into a We-Subject."⁵⁴ And although Sartre would declare that the experience of the "We-Subject," of intersubjective action, is not ontologically primary but merely a historical and psychological episode, we are still witnessing a dialectical "project of reversal" similar to the poetic justice and immanent reversibility of interpersonal reification. It is upon the basis of this fundamental doctrine that Sartre would launch his attack on objectivist conceptions of the condition of the proletariat in the *Critique*. In *Search for a Method*, the book that prefaced the *Critique*, this attack would culminate in the declaration that: "We refuse to confuse the alienated man with a thing or alienation with the physical laws governing external relations."⁵⁵ Thus, it matters little that class rather than race is the principal exemplar, in this context, of the phenomenon of collective reification as Sartre understands it. Sartrean existentialism regards *all* experiences of collective reification as equally demonic, and equally redeemable because anchored in that fundamental characteristic of the human condition which is freedom.

Alas, Fanon's account of the oppressive weight of "the white look [*le regard blanc*]" (PN, 109; BS, 110: RT) upon the black body is not marked by this macabre optimism. For one thing, that optimism is the obverse side of a fundamental conception of the for-itself and its consequences for human relations from which Fanon, for all his considerable debts to Sartre, demurs. What Paul Ricoeur described as the "philosophical style of no," which identifies "human reality with negativity,"⁵⁶ is explicitly repudiated by Fanon in the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks*: "The human being is not merely a possibility of recapture, of negation. If it is true that consciousness is the activity of transcendence, we have to see, too, that this transcendence is haunted by the problems of love and understanding. The human being is a *yes* that vibrates to cosmic harmonies" (PN, 26; BS, 10: RT). Fanon is prepared to entertain the plausibility of Sartre's portraits of being-for-others as studies in the pathology of human intercourse, exemplars of "bad faith and inauthenticity." Where Sartre's Hobbesian creatures will require a "radical conversion" in order to accept an ethics of mutuality, Fanon, the critic of desire corrupted by race, declares: "Today I believe in the possibility of love; that is why I endeavour to trace its imperfections, its pervers-

sions." To the chagrin of his future postmodernist readers, Fanon subscribes to a standard of "authentic love—wishing for others what one postulates for oneself, when that postulation unites the permanent values of human reality"—a standard that authorizes his condemnation of perverse desire (PN, 53: BS, 41–41).

But dramatists of the pathological or purveyors of the normal and the normative, Sartre and Fanon present us with different situations of desire and interaction—and consequently different ways of parting company with Hegel. It may indeed be the case that it is not Fanon's but Sartre's account of desire and interaction which exhibits an "Aristotelian logic" of "reciprocal exclusivity" with brutal consistency. In Sartre's world, Manicheism is an equal-opportunity employer. Each party in the self-other relation is capable of becoming *de trop*. In the colonial context, by contrast, one term and only one term in the colonizer-colonized relation is, according to Fanon (in the passage in which he invokes Aristotle's logic), *de trop*, "superfluous."

What then binds Sartre, phenomenologist of *normal* violence, to Fanon, critic of *colonial* violence? Otherwise put: What authorizes Sartre's valiant anticolonialism? Is Sartre's anticolonialism, unlike Fanon's, wholly adventitious to his philosophical anthropology? Sartre's explicit reflections on the colonial condition suggest ambiguous answers to this question. His introduction to Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* speaks of the "relentless reciprocity that binds the colonizer and the colonized—his product and his fate."⁵⁷ Following Memmi, Sartre appears to mean by this statement that the colonizer engenders the instrument of his own destruction. Colonizer and colonized are thus seen to be bound together by a dialectical relation similar to the Hegelian nexus of master and slave and the Marxist concept of the historical reciprocity of bourgeoisie and proletariat: "The secret of the proletariat, Marx once said, is that it bears within it the destruction of bourgeois society. We must be grateful to Memmi for reminding us that the colonized likewise has his secret, and that we are witnessing the infamous death-struggle of colonialism."⁵⁸ Can the logic of the colonial-racial system and its abolition be so readily assimilated to the discourse of class relations in Marxism? This is precisely the question posed by the passage in "Concerning Violence" which calls for Marxist analysis to be "slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem." We may wonder whether Sartre's understanding of the colo-

nizer-colonized relation suggested by the above gloss on Memmi's text is not simply a specification, in the guise of Marxist historicism, of his general theory of conflictual reciprocity. This suspicion is confirmed by Sartre's preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*. It is here that Sartre lauds Fanon for being the first since Engels—"if you set aside Sorel's fascist utterances"—to illuminate the role of violence in history. In a curious case of a misreading that is at once sympathetic and brazenly appropriative, Sartre suggests that Fanon's account of violence is but an instantiation of "the dialectic which liberal hypocrisy hides from you and which is as much responsible for our existence as for his" (WE, 14). The dialectic, doubtless, as construed by Sartre's social ontology.⁵⁹

And indeed this annexation of colonial history to History, hinted at in the 1961 preface, is rather more explicitly made earlier in those parts of the *Critique* dealing with colonialism.⁶⁰ Sartre has two interrelated purposes in this part of the work. First, he is determined to rescue the analysis of colonialism from vulgar Marxist socioeconomic determinism. Second, he wants to show that much as the colonial experience may appear to be an antidialectic unanchored in any identifiable human volition and responsibility, there remains, at the foundation of it all, human *praxis*. It must never be forgotten that the *practico-inert*—Sartre's name for the reified form which all human actions and transactions are condemned to assume—never erases the ontological principle of human agency, albeit an agency cheated of its transparency. The tyrannizing reification of the roles of colonizer and colonized is no exception to this tragic law of the dialectic.⁶¹

Sartre's critique of traditional Marxist perspectives on the colonial question is compelling. He objects to the ready-made deterministic formula which would regard the destruction of indigenous social structures and institutions as "the necessary result of the contact between two definite societies of which one is backward (or underdeveloped), agricultural and feudal, and the other industrialized." Such an objectivist explanation, he points out, obscures the deliberate violence employed to destroy the social and judicial systems of the colonized "the better to rob them"; it obscures, in other words, the crucial role of human intentions.⁶²

It may be thought that Sartre's critique is here underscoring the element of *irreciprocity* in the structure of colonial violence. Add to this his suggestive characterization of colonial Manicheism as one

that makes of the colonized—and of the colonized alone, it would seem—the “other than man,”⁶³ and Sartre’s analysis might be interpreted as stressing the fundamental deviation of the colonial relationship from the generic patterns of human interaction as he understands them to be. We discover, however, that for all its historical specificity, the phenomenon of colonial violence is only a variation on an ontological theme. Violence, including colonial violence, is still for Sartre an expression of inalienable freedom: “The only violence conceivable is that of freedom against freedom through the mediation of inorganic matter.”⁶⁴ In his anxiety to extricate the analysis of colonialism from the reductionism of vulgar Marxist theory and thus to develop a *critique* of the colonial experience, Sartre ends up by forcing that experience into the conceptual framework of his own Hobbesian anthropology. The commitment to anthropological universals has repressed Sartre’s own intimation of the difference which the colonial world makes. Violence emerges once more as a transhistorical constant neither specific to nor definitive of the colonial experience.

Is it possible to subject the colonial order to critical judgment on the basis of this “structural anthropology”? Can a phenomenological ontology of “radical evil” ask in what peculiar ways the colonial condition is radically dehumanizing, lacking in the minimal requirements of human association? And can it coherently generate a justification of anticolonial revolution? It would seem to be difficult to answer these questions affirmatively on the strength of Sartre’s analysis in *Being and Nothingness* and the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. To what, then, does Sartre’s noble hatred of racial and colonial domination owe what might be called its contingent foundation?

There exists one clue contained in an essay that predates Sartre’s pronouncements on the colonial question which I have just reviewed. The dramatic opening lines of *Black Orpheus* (1948) constitute, ironically, the most eloquent questioning of every future existentialist interpretation of the colonial experience—including Sartre’s! In the anthology of poetic writings to which this celebrated essay was a preface, Sartre would discern a revolutionary event of cosmic significance. And the reason, Sartre tells Europe, is this:

Here, in this anthology, are black men standing, black men who examine us; and I want you to feel, as I, the sensation of being

seen. For the white man has enjoyed for three thousand years the privilege of seeing without being seen. It was a seeing pure and uncomplicated; the light of his eyes drew all things from their primeval darkness. The whiteness of his skin was a further aspect of vision, a light condensed. The white man, white because he was man, white like the day, white as truth is white, white like virtue, lighted like a torch all creation; he unfolded the essence, secret and white, of existence. Today, the black men have fixed their gaze upon us and our gaze is thrown back in our eyes; black torches, in their turn, light the world and our white heads are only small lanterns balanced in the wind.⁶⁵

The African gaze as a psychoexistential event of world-historical moment. We will appreciate the contextual truth of Sartre's lyricism if we consider its informing understanding of the imperialist epoch and the colonial relation in the light of his fundamental existential analysis of the "Look." The "privilege of seeing without being seen": this impossible will to be "pure subject" free from the asphyxiating look of the Other had been identified in *Being and Nothingness* as no more than an ephemeral prerogative of every human being in his or her encounter with the Other.⁶⁶ A delusional dream, thanks to the mutual alternation of the experiences of being a subject and of being an object. We are faced, on this view, with a veritable monstrosity in the shape of the colonial relation and the politics of race: the monopolistic proprietorship by the colonizer and the colonizer alone of the privilege of being "pure subject"—a political economy of subjectivity that has no equivalent in the normal commerce of humanity. This is what the author of "The Lived Experience of the Black Person" means when, invoking Sartre against Sartre, he declares that: "Between the white person and me there is irremediably a relation of transcendence" (PN, 132; BS, 138: RT). In a footnote Fanon adds the following observation: "Though Sartre's speculations on the existence of the Other may be correct (to the extent, we must remember, to which *Being and Nothingness* describes an alienated consciousness), their application to a black consciousness proves fallacious. That is because the white man is not only the Other but also the master whether real or imaginary" (ibid.).

Here, then, is a drama of human(!) encounter and interaction in which no norm of reciprocity, not even a negative dialectic of murderous reciprocity, appears to prevail. *Black Skin, White Masks*

depicts the peculiarities of this situation by staging debates with Hegelian and post-Hegelian narratives of desire and recognition. Repeatedly the text is forced to conclude, despite the recalcitrant universalism of its author, that the object of its discourse, the colonial situation, “is not a classic one”; that this situation imposes upon its subjects “an existential deviation”; and that a signal index of this disabling deviation is that “the black person has no ontological resistance to the white gaze” (PN, 202, 31, 109; BS, 225, 16, 110: RT): the colonized subject is politically disempowered from playing the game of human agency. “Concerning Violence” says the same thing when it avers that it is in the formal logic of Aristotle’s *Categories*, not in the dialectical logic of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, that we will find the open secret of the colonial relation.⁶⁷

ANTIDIALECTIC AS SPACE

They have stolen the space that was mine.

—LÉON-GONTRAN DAMAS, *Pigments*

One arresting image encapsulates the apprehension of the colonial context as an antidialectic: that of the colonizer-colonized relation as an order of absolute difference and radical irreciprocity which is fixed, made manifest in *space*; that of the defining experience of the colonized as a visible condition of sequestration, exclusion, confinement to a “narrow world strewn with prohibitions”; and consequently that of the insurrection of the colonized—their first historical action—as a convulsive irruption into the “forbidden quarters” (DT, 79; WE, 37, 40). In distilling the peculiarities of colonial bondage into this paradigmatic metaphor, “Concerning Violence” takes up a critical vocabulary that goes back to Fanon’s first work. From the moment the author of *Black Skin, White Masks* screamed that he was “walled in” and insisted that to be colonized is to be made the prisoner of a “fixed position” (PN 114, 191; BS 117, 211), the trope of space and spatial delimitation would become the characteristic idiom of Fanon’s description of the colonial world.

This is indeed a noteworthy event in the literary history of the critique of domination. For a pivotal instance of the ways in which Fanon’s texts stage their avowedly “slight” revision of Marxist analysis is their elevation of spatial metaphors to precedence in the repre-

sensation of the structure of domination. It is as if the trope of space is the device by means of which Fanon's texts turn away from a literal allegiance to the Marxist tradition for which indeed *time*, rather than space, is the existential category that functions as the principal index of domination, alienation, and injustice. This turn to the rhetoric of space anticipates by nearly two decades Michel Foucault's far more explicit criticism of the "devaluation of space" in what may be described as the physics of critical discourse. Foucault would complain that: "Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic. For all those who confuse history with the old schemas of evolution, living continuity, organic development, the progress of consciousness or the project of existence, the use of spatial terms seems to have the air of an anti-history. If one started to talk in terms of space that meant one was hostile to them."⁶⁸

How could it be otherwise, this preeminence of the rhetoric of temporality in the Marxist canon and its cognate disdain for space? At the heart of Marx's social ontology and the critical theory of capitalism that is at once the premise and progeny of that social ontology is a preoccupation with *work* understood as the defining activity of human existence. Now, work is preeminently a temporal experience. Alexandre Kojève, reading Hegel with Heideggerian lenses, goes further: "Work *is* Time, and that is why it necessarily exists *in* time: it requires time."⁶⁹ Kojève's copula may be going too far in identifying work with time;⁷⁰ but Marx would be following in the spirit of Hegel when he writes that "time is the space of human development."⁷¹ Human activity both as a principle of individuation and an expression of sociality is possible only as a temporal project, as the purposeful deployment of time for the satisfaction of personal and communal needs. As the *Grundrisse* puts it: "Economy of time, to this all economy ultimately reduces itself."⁷² In this its essential function, time shares the potential properties of human activity itself: open-ended and noncompulsive, it is permissive of qualitative differences in the generation of personal projects and communal use-values. The servant of human self-objectification, time is tolerant of polymorphous modes of activity as well as the "natural particularity" of the objects and products of human work.⁷³

No wonder that Marx's critical theory of capitalism depicts coercive, unfree, *alienated* forms of work as being essentially an experi-

ence in the capture and corruption of time: an alienation of the human experience of time that has a qualitative as well as a quantitative dimension.

First, it is, according to Marx, the special characteristic of production for exchange, of the capitalist process of production, to reduce to insignificance the whole "qualitative aspect"⁷⁴ of productive activity as such; it converts heterogeneous processes and products of activity alike into quantitatively homogeneous entities measured by "definite masses of crystallized labour-time."⁷⁵ As creators of value, productive activities and products are equally "mere homogeneous congelations of undifferentiated labour."⁷⁶ In this totalitarian egalitarianism, time as labor-time, as the common measure of work and objects, becomes a collusive agent in the expulsion of quality from the human world, an accomplice in that "rational" indifference of the commodity form to the "natural properties" of human beings and things of which money is the alienated emblem: "Money is labour time in the form of a general object, or the objectification of general labour time, labour time as a *general commodity*."⁷⁷ Phenomenologically, time is thus robbed of its generic, ontological characteristic of protean and purposeful freedom. In the words of Lukács, "Time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable 'things' . . . in short, it becomes space."⁷⁸

Second, the critique of alienated time is coextensive with the theory of surplus value. The superordinate goal of the capitalist process of production, according to Marx, "is to produce not a use-value, but a commodity also; not only a use-value, but value, not only value, but at the same time surplus-value."⁷⁹ If the difference between "Work" and "Labor," or between the universal form of use-value and the historically determinate form of exchange-value, represents a qualitative transformation of the function of human time, the difference between the exchange-value of labor-power and the surplus value produced by labor represents a quantitative temporal relation, a relation that expresses "the degree of exploitation of labour-power by capital, or of the labourer by the capitalist."⁸⁰ For surplus value is the product of the "surplus time" or "surplus labour-time" expended by the laborer beyond the portion of the working day or beyond the labor-time necessary for producing the value of labor-power. Surplus value, Marx claims, "results only from

a quantitative excess of labour, from a lengthening-out of one and the same labour-process."⁸¹ The wealth of the capitalist is, in the language of the *Grundrisse*, based on "the theft of others' labour time."⁸²

Grim as this picture of the dispossession and deformation of time in capitalist society is, its paradigmatic status in Marx's critical theory is an eloquent testimony to the insistent humanism of his ontology: it is a function of the dynamic and activist principle at the foundation of the Marxist conception of social being. Just as alienation is the consequence of an activity of alienation—that is, a historically degraded form of human activity—so the worker's place in time under capitalism is a historical displacement of the fundamental relation of the human agent to the world. The production of value and surplus value, represented here as qualitative and quantitative relations of alienated temporality, originates in the universally necessary production of use-values, represented here as the generic function of human temporality. Like the entire experience of estrangement and domination of which it is symbolic, alienated time is a historical excrescence upon the structure of human activity.

Marx's program for the transcendence of alienation would therefore not call for the liberation of humanity *from* time—for such a project accords ontological status to the phenomenal form of time in a determinate historical experience. Not liberation *from* time, as Herbert Marcuse once envisioned,⁸³ but the liberation *of* time, "time set free,"⁸⁴ is the only goal consistent with Marx's social ontology.

In what does the possibility of this disalienation of time reside? Nothing other than time itself. For time is at once project and process: tragic story of the human project and redeeming irony of the historical process engendered by that very project. So it is that the capitalist's seizure of the worker's time and his disfiguring of human temporality into the antidialectic of space would be avenged by a new economy of time made possible by none other than the developmental history of capitalism itself. The *Grundrisse* sketches a tragicomic narrative of time and history according to which the crowning achievement of capitalism would be to generate an automatic system of production potentially capable of radically reducing necessary labor time. The surplus time now misappropriated as surplus value by the capitalist would then be made available as free, "disposable time." Marx describes this freed time as "space for the

development of the individual's full productive forces, and also those of society."⁸⁵ A fecund remarriage of being and time with consequences never before imagined; and all this, as Anaximander might have said, "according to the ordinance of time."

Would Fanon question the plausibility of this narrative of time? Probably not. Put even more radically: Would Fanon question the prominence here assigned to time in the poetics of human existence? Quite likely not. Was it not the author of *Black Skin, White Masks* who declared that the "architecture" of his own text was framed by the phenomenon of "temporality" and that "every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time" (PN, 30; BS 14-15)? Indeed, all of Fanon's texts are suffused with the haunting presence of a repressed discourse of temporality. Repressed because it suffers the fate of all that is deemed ontologically primordial and paramount. "The Lived Experience of the Black Person" goes so far as to say that "every ontology is made unattainable in a society that has been subjected to colonialism and its civilization [*une société colonisée et civilisée*] . . . In the *Weltanschauung* of a colonized people there is an impurity, a flaw that outlaws any ontological explanation" (PN, 108; BS, 109-110). A veto upon every ontology? Not quite. Not even in the peculiar world of the colonized are intimations of human universals rendered inexpressible. Not even in this petrified world is the figure of time erased. What the figure of time loses in the "colonial context" is its status as a regulative principle in the narrative of social being and the critique of domination; it here functions, thanks to "the dead time introduced by colonialism" (DT 32; WE, 69; RT), as an "ought," an eviscerated organ of the social body that demands to be resurrected, "restored to its proper place" in the critical narration of the social condition.

To testify with visceral fidelity to the colonial experience is to dramatize what it is that justifies this demand for the resurrection of time *as a demand*, as a radically transgressive political act: the usurpation and coercive structuring of space as the defining reality of social domination, indeed of social being; the ascendancy, as a result, of the rhetoric of spatiality in social and political discourse over rhetorical modes associated with the social history of human temporality. This is to say that to apprehend the colonial world "in its immediacy" is to demote to the status of second-order phenomena the family of critical terms to which the rhetoric of time belongs: alienated labor, production relations, surplus value, exploitation.

Read as controlling metaphors in the political economy of time, these terms lose in the "colonial context" the primacy assigned to them in the canon, the archetypal materialist critique of domination. Such is the perspectival circumstance that constrains "Concerning Violence" to question the universality of the determinant role which classical Marxism ascribes to social relations of production—*social relations of time*—as signifiers of inequality; and to adduce the idiosyncratic case of a logic of social hierarchy which "parcels out the world" by virtue of a politics of space founded on race rather than an economy of time coadunate with class. The text goes so far as to suggest that the manifest measure of "colonial exploitation," the palpable index of its "totalitarian character," is to be found not primarily in the rate of surplus value but in the magnitude of the physical and metaphysical chasm dividing the colonizer and the colonized (DT, 10; WE, 41). It is in this sense that Fanon's text prefigures Foucault's criticism of Marxism's "devaluation of space" in its critical vocabulary.

But we know that it is not only historical materialism with its organizing tropes of time, class, and historicity that Fanon's discourse is compelled to interrogate in dramatizing the *differentia specifica* of the colonial regime. Repeatedly Fanon acts as interlocutor of other metanarratives of human existence deploying other emblematic rhetorics. Seen from the perspective of another such critical encounter, say, Fanon's conversations with existential phenomenology and its characteristic tropes, the ascendancy of the rhetoric of space in Fanon's discourse may well be regarded not as a descent from the heights of a humanist poetics of time, but rather as a specification of what in the "colonial context" becomes of an equally primitive and paradigmatic sphere of human existence: space and spatiality. There is no lament, on this view, of the fall of being from time into space. It is not the irreducible necessity of our spatiality which is the object of Fanon's protest but the transformation of this all-too-human circumstance into an extraordinary state of *coercion*.

In a conceptual analysis indebted to existential phenomenology and remarkably reminiscent of Fanon's vocabulary, Michael A. Weinstein has argued that *coercion* is a distinctive mode of domination, and that it is "an experience primarily associated with the human condition of being-in-space." Weinstein writes:

Coercion characterizes a situation when one or more persons are restrained by one or more others from using a space in some way,

providing that the coerced person planned to use the space in the manner that is being prevented, and the coercer expressly intended to prevent that use. In this case, the coerced must not have substituted a more satisfactory plan for his original plan of action. Coercion may also characterize a situation in which one or more persons are compelled by one or more others to use a space in some way, providing that the coerced did not plan to use the space in the manner that is being compelled. In this case, the actions that are being compelled must not be judged as more satisfactory by the coerced person than his original plan of action. Essentially, the second situation is not very different from the first, since being compelled to use a space in a certain way restrains one from using that space or another in an alternative manner. However, there is a difference in difficulty between restraining an action and compelling one. If one wishes to restrain another's action, he need only move the other to a space in which the action is no longer possible, or transform the space in such a way that the action is no longer possible. If one wishes to compel a specific action, he must retain enough release in the situation so that the coerced person will not believe that performing the action leaves him hopeless. Coercion as restraint produces the condition of coarctation, in which the coerced is deprived of his liberty or "confined to a narrow place." Coercion as compulsion produces the condition of slavery, in which the actions of the coerced become means to the realization of another's plan. It is necessary to note, however, that coercion as compulsion presupposes coercion as restraint. One cannot begin to compel another to use a space in a certain way unless he has already restrained the other from using space in alternative ways. At the centre of coercion is effective control of space.⁸⁶

A cursory look at the philosophical and literary antecedents of the discourse of space in Fanon will show that he would have concurred with Weinstein's central thesis: coercion is "the imposition of restraint in the spatial dimension of human existence."⁸⁷ And it will throw into relief the specific gravity of coercion and the peculiar hypertrophy of the spatial that, on Fanon's view, characterize the colonial condition.

"We live and act in space, and our personal lives, as well as the social life of humanity, unfolds in space." Thus Eugène Minkowski, in his seminal work *Lived Time*, proposed the concept of "lived

space" as a correlate to the concept of *le temps vécu*, "lived time."⁸⁸ Just as time, in this phenomenological perspective, lost its objectivist status, processual character, externality, in a word, indifference to human action, and became *temporality*—the fateless matrix of human activity, an existential reality which is cognate with the possibility of human historicity and transcendence itself; so space as *spatiality* was no longer a geometric relation, nor a mere material enclosure wherein physical beings involuntarily dwell, but the free construction of consciousness in the service of its manifold activities, affective, expressive, and practical.

Existential spatiality is thus not a physical encasement but the experience of openness and self-incurred limitations; the realization (in the activist sense of a constitutive experience) by an embodied consciousness of its orbit of possibilities and impossibilities, the field of its conative and practical enterprises, what Sartre referred to as "hodological space."⁸⁹ It is in this vein that Merleau-Ponty wrote: "We have said that space is existential; we might just as well have said that existence is spatial."⁹⁰ Purged of the suggestion of infinite mobility and possibility, of a boundless liberty made possible by the subject's authorship of its own "barriers and obstacles," its own "coefficient of adversity,"⁹¹ because constituted by its own intentional projects—purged of this transcendental conception of liberty with which Sartre's account of human spatiality is tinged—the idea of existential spatiality admits what Paul Ricoeur calls "a principle of narrowness" within the very experience of "being open to the world": the possibility, more than that, the irreducible necessity, of a limitation upon our "wanting, experiencing, receiving, expressing ability."⁹² For Ricoeur, this irreducible necessity of "spatial closure" and limitation is ultimately rooted in the inescapable finitude of human reality against which the monumental hubris of the Sartrean for-itself is powerless.

Now, a *critical theory* of "lived space" is possible only if, to the ontological concept of "the spatiality of *Dasein*" (Heidegger),⁹³ is added an analysis of the social relations of spatiality: a theory of the sociostructural organization and distribution of space as the material reality, so to speak, of which constriction and release, freedom and coercion, constitute a palpable homologous experience on the level of consciousness. Such a translation of phenomenological ontology into a critical theory of spatiality is hardly accomplished if, as in that admixture of idealist metaphysics and Hobbesian anthropology

which is Sartrean existentialism, the subject's self-constituted impediments in his "hodological space" (subjective liberty as subjective masochism) is reread as an interpersonal struggle for the monopolistic control and exploitation of scarce space; so that restraint as a spatial relation becomes the ineliminable function of the presence of the Other, any Other, irrespective of sociohistorical determinations (interpersonal relations as the territorial imperialism of asocial consciousnesses).

We need only recall Fanon's repudiation of the restless imperialism of the Sartrean for-itself and its inherent asociality to guess that his conception of the coercive structuring of space in the colonial situation has no affinity with such a Hobbesian anthropology. What Fanon retained from Sartre and the existentialists was the formal notion of human liberty as the availability and openness of the field of action and self-determination; freedom as "la dimension ouverte de toute conscience [the open dimension of each consciousness]" (PN, 208; BS, 232), now conceived as the normative criterion for the critique of a specific, political experience: colonial domination. The critique of racial and colonial domination here takes the form of a libertarian revolt against a "siege" imposed upon the consciousness and existence of the colonized, constricting and distorting all their actions in a Procrustean space of fixed positions, resulting in "an impossibility of expansion," and engendering pathological mechanisms of escape (PN, 43; BS, 28). In a word, the critique of domination becomes an analysis of the spatial structuring of positions. Let us call this Fanon's critical *topology of roles and relations* in the colonial world. With this politicization of the existentialist notion of spatiality into a critical topology of roles and relations occurs a transformation of the dynamic principle at the heart of the existentialist conception into a static category.

But perhaps the single most important literary source of this metaphors of space in Fanon's texts—perhaps the single most important influence upon his entire representation of racial and colonial bondage—is Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* [*Notebook of a Return to my Native Land*]. Here in the opening movement of the famous poem is a grim portrait of a spatial landscape so coercive and enervating as to produce in its inhabitants a "frightful inanity" of their reason for existence, aborting their dreams of action at the very beginning of the day, "at the end of the dawn," when the projects of everyday life, under normal existential circum-

stances, enjoy the irrepressible fantasy of unbridled liberty before the imminent intervention of the reality principle; so that their very awakening is cursed with an irredeemable absurdity ("la plage de songes et l'insensé réveil").⁹⁴ Césaire's colonized city is space emptied of every trace of human subjectivity, robbed of that constitutive authority of consciousness which is existential spatiality; oppressing human beings with "the geometric weight of its eternally renewed cross," it transforms them into idle and vanquished "spectators" of the temporal process, debarred from participation in a community of narratable deeds, in "anything which is expressed, affirmed, freed" in their own land.⁹⁵ The recurrent modulations of the anaphora "Au bout du petit matin . . . cette ville plate . . . dans cette ville inerte, cette foule désolée sous le soleil . . .," insistently capture the inertial relationship of space and time, their abysmal failure as energizing principles. And through his sardonic collocation of *inerte* and *soleil*—inertia under the sun—Césaire discloses the human and historical responsibility for this denaturing of time and space.

To this poetic representation of the utter wreckage of a people's fundamental existential relations, Fanon makes explicit allusion in the first chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks* when he attempts to identify the cause of colonized subjects' alienated behavior, "the source of this new way of being." Césaire's description, writes Fanon, "was generous"; it was "anything but poetic . . . Yes, this city is deplorably played out. So is its life" (PN, 37, 39; BS, 21, 24). But in order to underscore the political causation of what he elsewhere refers to as "the inert, passive and sterilizing pressure of the 'native' environment" (SR, 53; DC, 71), Fanon must recast Césaire's pathetic fallacy into signal details of the "geographical ordering" decreed by colonial policy: not only the juridical instruments by means of which the colonizers "physically delimit . . . the space of the colonized," but also the supportive ideology that sees in the colonized "the quintessence of evil" (DT, 7, 10; WE, 38, 41; RT). "Concerning Violence" sums up the effect of this physical and metaphysical segregation as follows: "*The native is a being hemmed in*" (DT, 18; WE, 52, my emphasis).

Whatever dimension of this geography of domination is accentuated in a particular text (the psychoexistential dimension in *Black Skin White Masks*; the juridical, socioeconomic, and sociopsychological in *The Wretched of the Earth*), the politics of space in the colonial context would seem to be the very extremity of the mechanics of

coercion underscored by Michael Weinstein: To be coerced is to be both restrained from using one's space and to be constrained to use space in a manner not freely chosen by the coerced. Coercion both proscribes and forcefully prescribes use of space; it hems in bodies and souls not only by taking away the space that was theirs but also by tyrannically allocating spaces and dictating the limits and range of action in the delimited zone.

Nowhere is the psychoexistential dimension of this dual mechanism of coercion more poignantly evoked than in that section of "The Lived Experience of the Black Person" in which Fanon describes how it is that the colonized subject as a black body is at once sequestered and forcefully given space. Fanon here takes up an important motif of existentialist thought according to which the problem of human spatiality is intimately related to the fact of human embodiment: the fact that it is my body which must implement a plan of action by negotiating space in the presence of other bodies. Bodies, space, and action—in the relationship between these, existentialists like Merleau-Ponty saw a metaphor for the "ambiguity of being-in-the-world."⁹⁶ How the body "in the face of its tasks" deploys itself in space is what Merleau-Ponty called "the corporeal scheme."⁹⁷ The prospects of human "freedom and servitude," autonomy and alienation, are here made coextensive with the possibilities of our embodied situatedness in space.

Following Merleau-Ponty, and demurring from Sartre's more pessimistic version of the drama of corporeality, spatiality, action, and otherness, Fanon says of the normal functioning of the bodily schema: "A slow composition of my *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world—such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive structuring of the self and of the world—definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world" (PN, 109; BS, 111). There follows a description of the brutal truncation of the dialectical possibilities that inhere in what Merleau-Ponty called the body's "spatiality of situation,"⁹⁸ its place here usurped by a strategy of being-in-space that is *sui generis*.

Below the corporeal schema I had sketched a historico-racial schema . . . Assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema. In the train it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third

person but in a triple person. In the train I was given not one but two, three places. I had already stopped being amused. It was not that I was finding febrile coordinates in the world. I existed triply: I occupied space. I moved toward the other . . . and the evanescent other, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared. Nausea . . . I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. (PN, 110; BS, 111-112)

"I occupied space." Some space! Homi Bhabha, if I understand him correctly, is too quick, much too quick, to squeeze the sting out of this painful scene of phobic and repressive distancing. He takes a sad song and, thanks to the wondrous permutations of deconstructive irony, manages to make it infinitely better. Bhabha reads Fanon as saying that the "colonial subject" is "primordially fixed and yet triply split between the incongruent knowledges of body, race, ancestors."⁹⁹ But Fanon's text is far less reassuring concerning the effects of what Bhabha calls "racist stereotypical discourse" and the coercive location of bodies and spirits that accompanies it: "I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics . . . On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed and made myself an object" (PN, 110-111; BS, 112). This passage suggests that in the metaphysics of institutional racism "my body, my race, my ancestors" are by no means objects of "incongruent knowledges"; to the contrary, they are invariant versions and repetitions of the same "eternal essence" (PN, 47; BS, 35). That is why they are to be segregated as an undifferentiated collectivity from their radical contrary, the white man. The multiplicity of the spaces assigned to the black body is at once belied by, and yet is a function of, the "totalitarian character" of colonial coercion and racial segregation. The peculiarity of the colonial condition of being-in-space is that whatever the relative material size of the space assigned to the subjugated, the colonized must remain absolutely fixed in this space, separated by an unbridgeable chasm from the "others," compelled to renounce the "self," the individuality which is normally validated in the body's spatial strategies. The colonized subject, Fanon writes elsewhere, is "besieged from within by the colonizer" (SR, 78; DC, 92).

If "The Lived Experience of the Black Person" highlights the

psychoexistential aspects of coercion, "Concerning Violence" dramatizes the political characteristics and social-psychological consequences of life lived in that occupied territory which is "the space of the colonized"—"this narrow world strewn with prohibitions" (DT, 7; WE, 37). Let us look at the principal features of this symbolism of space.

First, the text repeatedly stresses the peculiar tenacity of the spatial divide, the unmistakable rigidity of the chasm that separates the colonizer and the colonized, manifest in all the institutions of civil society. It suggests that as a mode of social hierarchy the colonial order is *sui generis*: "The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not recall apartheid in South Africa. Yet, if we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies. This approach to the colonial world, its ordering and its geographical layout will allow us to make out the lines on which a decolonized society will be organized" (DT, 7; WE, 37-38). To the archetypal topos of two nations, two cities in a divided world, the text now adds a special twist with a microscopic topography of "la ville du colon" and "la ville du colonisé," throwing into relief the radical contrarities of their material and symbolic properties:

The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly-lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage-cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown, and hardly thought about. The settlers' feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you are never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settlers' town is a well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners.

The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. *It is a world without spaciousness*; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The

town of the colonized is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The town of the colonized is a crouching town, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty arabs. (DT, 8; WE, 39, my emphasis)

Moreover, this extreme "social dichotomy" (SR, 53; DC, 71) is policed with tyrannizing memorials of the conquest and pervasive "signs" against transgressing the limits. The result is what Weinstein calls "the condition of coarctation": "A world divided into compartments, a motionless, Manicheistic world, a world of statues: the statue of the general who carried out the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge; a world which is sure of itself, which crushes with its stones the backs flayed by whips: this is the colonial world. The native is a being hemmed in; apartheid is simply one form of the division into compartments of the colonial world. The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits" (DT, 18; WE, 51-52).

From this description of the defining properties of the colonial world's "geographical ordering," "Concerning Violence" draws a conclusion that goes to the heart of post-Leninist accounts of how it is that systems of dominance are sustained. From Gramsci to Foucault, these post-Leninist theories insist that the institutions and practices which uphold relations of domination in society must not be seen as exercising a wholly coercive or repressive function at the behest of a unitary social agent. To the classical Marxist view of political power as a servant of class interests, Gramsci brings, according to a recent interpreter, a corrective "Aristotelian view of politics as the science of the good life,"¹⁰⁰ an activity informed by some sense of common ends which are truly irreducible to the narrow "corporate-economic interests" of one class. This is what Gramsci meant by *hegemony*. As for Foucault, not only is power far from being solely an instrument of prohibition, exclusion, and coercion. Power is also much too ubiquitous, too "capillary" in its "form of existence," too cunningly acephalous in its manner of operation to be adequately captured by the model of monarchical sovereignty which underwrites the Marxist notion of political power as the property of a social class.¹⁰¹

With Foucault "Concerning Violence" concurs that power is indeed omnipresent and all-pervasive in the colonial context. But there is here such an unvarnished transparency of the "lines of force," such

an unmasked location of human collectivities in radically differing spaces of existence, that power is patently identifiable not indeed with the ruling class, but with the "governing race." With Gramsci "Concerning Violence" subscribes to a neo-Aristotelian conception of the political according to which it is the tie that, despite or rather because of the separations and subjugations of the social world, binds unequal citizens into a community of ends. But it is precisely this normative Gramscianism that generates the brutal realism of Fanon's text and impels it to see in the colonial regime a telling exception to the rule:

The colonial world is a world cut in two. *The dividing line*, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression. In capitalist societies the educational system, whether lay or clerical, the structure of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary honesty of workers who are given a medal after fifty years of good and loyal service, and the affection which springs from harmonious relations and good behaviour—all these aesthetic expressions of respect for the established order serve to create around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably. In the capitalist countries a multitude of moral teachers, counsellors and "bewilders" are placed between the exploited and those in power. In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the colonized and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure violence. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of order; he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the colonized. (DT, 7; WE, 38, my emphasis: RT)

There is here no mediation of opposition by an appeal to a shared community and a common humanity. If hegemony is precisely such a mediation, then the colonial regime is indeed the order of immediacy, one in which "the language of pure violence" is conspicuous by its "*immediate presence*." That is why it is grossly erroneous for

critics such as Hannah Arendt to suppose that Fanon equates politics with violence.¹⁰² On the contrary, he is saying with the most classical of political philosophers that where there is no public space, there is no political relationship, only violence, "violence in the state of nature" (DT, 25; WE, 61). "Concerning Violence" tells us that a social order in which existential positions are implacably fixed in separate spaces by virtue of racial membership violates the minimal requirements of political association. "The politics of race"? Now, *that*, "Concerning Violence" seems to be saying, is an oxymoron.

STRUGGLES OVER THE "DIVIDING LINE"

Now, the essential point is to establish *whether there is any struggle*. Engels makes fun of Dühring for speaking somewhat hastily of *oppression*. But, in trying to correct him, he goes to the opposite extreme: *economism*.

—JEAN-PAUL SARTRE, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*

Exploitation as expropriation of space; subjugation as confinement of a human collectivity to a segregated and narrow sphere of existence; inequality as a bipolar relation of social closure; alienation as the prohibition of motion and action by the law of the "dividing line": such is the central image of the colonial condition that emerges from Fanon's texts glossed through the dominant rhetorical mode of "Concerning Violence." In its signal strategic revision of classical Marxism's critical vocabulary, this defining image replaces the denunciation of capital's "blind unrestrainable passion, its were-wolf hunger for surplus-labour" expressed by the heartless prolongation of the working day,¹⁰³ with a condemnation of the "totalitarian" ordering of lived and living space. What then is the symbolic equivalent, in this topography of domination, for that *struggle over time*, "the struggle for a normal working day,"¹⁰⁴ narrated by Marx in *Capital*?

In "Racism and Culture," Fanon asks: "But the people who are prey to racism, the enslaved, exploited, weakened social group—how do they behave? What are their defense mechanisms?" (RA, 39; AR, 38). Fanon's account of these defense mechanisms is framed by the controlling metaphor of "frontiers," frontiers which outlaw trans-racial intersubjectivity: "The white world, the only honourable one, barred me from all participation. A man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man—or at least like a nigger. I shouted a greeting to the world and the world slashed

away my joy. I was told to stay within my bounds, to go back where I belonged" (PN, 112; BS, 114-114). Faced with "the dividing line," the colonized subject is caught in an anxiogenic conundrum of fascination and taboo:

The colonized is always on the alert, for since he can only make out with difficulty the many signs of the colonial world, he is never sure whether or not he has transgressed the limits. Confronted with a world arranged by the colonialist, the colonized is always presumed guilty. But the guilt of the colonized is never a guilt which he accepts; it is rather a kind of curse, a sword of Damocles, for, in his innermost spirit, the colonized admits no accusation. He is overpowered but not tamed; he is treated as an inferior but he is not convinced of his inferiority. He is patiently waiting until the colonizer is off his guard to fly at him. The muscles of the colonized are always tensed. You can't say that he is apprehensive, that he is terrorized. He is in fact always ready to exchange the role of the quarry for that of the hunter. The colonized is a persecuted person who dreams eternally of becoming the persecutor. The symbols of social order—the police, the bugle-calls in the barracks, military parades and the waving flags—are at one and the same time inhibitory and excitative: for they do not convey the message "Don't dare to budge"; but rather, they cry out "Get ready to attack." And, in fact, if the colonized had any tendency to fall asleep and to forget, the colonizer's arrogance and his anxiety to test the strength of the colonial system would remind him at every turn that the great confrontation cannot be put off indefinitely. That impulse to take the colonizer's place implies a tonicity of muscles the whole time. In fact we know that in certain emotional conditions, the presence of an obstacle accentuates the tendency towards motion. (DT, 19; WE, 53; RT)

True, the obduracy of the obstacle may well arrest all motion, repulse from the existence of the colonized the very consciousness of possibility, inculcate in them a paralyzing sense of limitation. In that case, the habit of agency, lost in the real world, can be regained only in fantasy:

The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits. This is why the dreams of the native are always dreams of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action

and aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, climbing; I dream that I burst out laughing, that I span a river in one stride, or that I am followed by a flood of motor-cars which never catch up with me. During the period of colonization, the colonized never stops achieving his freedom from nine in the evening until six in the morning. (DT, 18; WE, 52)

But in spite of pervasive symbols of prohibition, the scandalous transparency of the colonizer's alluring space will also induce in the colonized an all-consuming "look of envy."

The look that the colonized turn on the colonizer's town is a look of lust, a look of envy. Dreams of possession. All manner of possession: to sit at the colonizer's table, to sleep in the colonizer's bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man. And this the colonizer knows very well; when their glances meet he avers bitterly, but always on the defensive: "They want to take our place." It is true, for there is no colonized man who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place. (DT, 8; WE, 39)

What is certain is that Fanon's texts register a deep ambivalence regarding the colonized subjects' dreams and acts in the face of the "dividing line." The principle that informs these dreams and acts is clear: "there is a psychological phenomenon which consists in the belief that the world will open to the degree that the frontiers are broken down" (PN, 36; BS, 21). But how to open these frontiers jealously guarded by the "symbols of social order"?

A dominant reaction of the colonized subject is, according to "Racism and Culture," to refuse the binary essentialism which sustains the colonial order. To a discourse that reduces existence to an unchangeable essence and divides the world according to racial membership, the colonized oppose a disavowal of race as a foundation of subjectivity. Against the relentless racialization of the world, "the racialized social group tries to imitate the oppressor and thereby to deracialize itself. The 'inferior race' denies itself as a different race" (RA, 39; AR, 38). This amounts to nothing less than denying what the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks* calls the "metaphysics" of the colonizer-colonized relation, the metaphysics of absolute difference that governs racial rule (PN, 26; BS, 10).

Two paradigmatic acts exemplify this strategy, ultimately doomed

to failure, of contesting the “dividing line”—the motion of language and the motion of desire: language as a sign of a cultural conquest of difference; desire as a vehicle for establishing an affective community. By virtue of these twin acts, the colonized subject, institutionally “hemmed in,” prisoner of “an eternal essence,” is reborn as a transcending subject. “Sealed into that crushing objecthood,” cries “The Lived Experience of the Black Person,” the colonized “turns beseechingly” to the world of the other (PN, 108; BS, 109), there to find an imagined community of meaning made flesh. Beyond its special instantiations in the Antillean world Fanon knew so intimately, this is the story of self-alienation presented in the first three chapters of *Black Skin, White Masks*, those allegories on language and desire in the context of racial rule. If the racism of the “dividing line” is founded on what Marx might have called a “crude materialism,” the colonized would assert the power of human historicity—the freedom, as Sartre would have said—of the human project. They would claim a “right of citizenship” (PN, 50; BS, 38) in an achieved commonwealth of meaning, a space of intersubjectivity that is open and transracial. They would in effect contest the Aristotelian logic of “reciprocal exclusivity,” specific to the “colonial context,” with an Aristotelian norm of the political community whose members have renounced absolute difference by virtue of sharing a common vocabulary of the good.

“The Black Person and Language”¹⁰⁵ (the first chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*) portrays the acquisition of the master’s speech as an emblematic right of passage into this imagined transracial community, the “key capable of opening doors that were barred” to the colonized (PN, 50; BS, 38). The language of the colonizer assumes a magically transfigurative and transgressive power. The text is quick to point out that “the problem of language” here dramatized is entirely different from the archetypal human experience of language:

The black person in the Antilles will be proportionately whiter—that is, he will come closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language. I am not unaware that this is one of a person’s attitude face to face with Being. The person who possesses a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power. Paul

Valéry knew this, for he called language 'the god gone astray in the flesh.' (PN, 34; BS, 18: RT)

There is in the colonial context a peculiar violence, a surplus aggressiveness in this will to master the world by possessing the word. And indeed Fanon teases us in the text with the promise of "a work now in preparation" to be called *Le langage et l'agressivité* (ibid). For in the delirious pleasure of the master's purloined word is contained the promise of a vicarious participation in the world which that language names and orders. Wrenching himself free from an unwanted particularity, the colonized subject, writes Fanon in "Racism and Culture," "*flings himself* upon the imposed culture"—language being its principal institution—"with the energy and tenacity of a drowning man" (RA, 40; AR, 39). Linguistic competence as a kind of heraldic mask that metamorphoses the black skin and enables entrance into a forbidden world: we are in the presence of a mode of symbolic behavior foreign to the eternal dramatics of social being and the universal pragmatics of communicative action.

Equally peculiar in its function is the motion of desire for the Other dramatized in "The Woman of Color and the White Man" and "The Man of Color and the White Woman." To revisit these scenes of alienated desire with the guidance of "Concerning Violence" is to see in them versions of a single project: the will to take the place of the colonizer. In these two chapters we discover the affective consequences of this project, the veritable sadomasochistic impulses attending the offer of "black love to a white soul" (PN, 65; BS, 56).

What is noteworthy in these texts is the manner in which—contrary to superficial readings—they stage and deconstruct gender specifications of this motion of desire. There is on the one hand, the female self-renunciation and supine servility of a Mayotte Capécia who "tolerates anything from her lord," the white man (PN, 65; BS, 56). On the other hand, there is the black male's masculinist fantasy of conquering the white world by possessing the white woman. How could it be otherwise, this perverse struggle of desire against race supremacy using the depraved weapons and myths of gender hierarchy? The problem for these texts, it seems, is how to register the specific pathology of gender relations and ideology in a racialized context. Without reducing the experiences of male and female subjects to a simple sameness, these texts see in their affective relation

to "a white soul" a common urge: that of seeking "recognition, incorporation into a group that had seemed hermetic" (PN, 66; BS, 58). No doubt, the desire of the black man for the white woman betrays the generic psychopathology of masculinist fantasies of conquest and possession: it is a desire to conquer through her "white culture, white beauty, white whiteness"; a desire, even, to "have white men under his command" (PN, 71, 69; BS, 63, 61). But this gender-specific modality of racialized desire is, for all its aggressive triumphalism, quite compatible with "a constant effort," on the part of the colonized male, "to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence" (PN, 68; BS, 60). In a word, the gender hierarchy and symbolism upon which interracial desire is parasitic do not erase the psychopolitical commonalities that define the reactions of colonized man and woman in the face of the "dividing line." There is little to choose between Mayotte Capécia and Jean Veneuse, figures of perverted desire in a universe of race supremacy.

For ultimately neither the motion of desire nor the motion of language can undo the colonial context as colonial context, however fervently the colonized disown their sequestered bodies and souls, their "corporeal malediction" and "eternal essence." However seriously the colonized pursue the project of self-alienation that goes by the name of assimilation, "this alienation is never wholly successful," precisely because it is in the nature of racial rule that "the oppressor quantitatively and qualitatively limits the evolution" (RA, 40; AR, 38). The closure is one mandated by the racial absolutism of colonial rule. On this point "Racism and Culture" is adamant: "a colonial country is a racist country." There is here an immediate coincidence, a necessary isomorphism of power structure and racist ideology; "a flawless logic" governs their relationship (RA, 41-42; AR, 40). No matter what material, communicative, and affective exchanges are opened between the colonizer and the colonized, no matter the class or gender of the agents of these exchanges, there is inevitably a frontier proscribing anything like reciprocity, to say nothing of equality. Male and female, acculturated *évolué* and industrial worker alike, will "come up against racism." The *évolué* will find that the foundations of his borrowed identity and claim to exceptional status—"his knowledge, his appropriation of precise and complicated techniques," his possession of rational discourse—that these acquisitions are powerless before the speechless obstinacy of the racial divide (*ibid*). The industrial worker will discover that the conventional

constraints and capacities of the proletariat *as a class*, their archetypal conditions of existence and terms of social discourse—above all, the discourse of *production time* which frames the proletariat's struggle with capital—that all these are of less immediate consequence than the confrontation with the immovable object of racism: “Developing his technical knowledge in contact with more and more perfected machines, entering into the dynamic circuit of industrial production, meeting men from remote regions in the framework of the concentration of capital, that is to say, on the job, discovering the assembly line, the team, production ‘time,’ in other words yield per hour, the oppressed is shocked to find that he continues to be the object of racism and contempt” (RA, 40; AR, 39).

There can hardly be a more explicit juxtaposition of archetype and idiosyncrasy, of the condition of the working class and the condition of the racialized class of workers, than the passage above. There is here a displacement of struggles over time expressing the variable magnitude of relative surplus value, by a confrontation with the constant magnitude of the “dividing line” and the absolutism of racist ideology. If we take this account of the experience of the colonized, racialized worker as paradigmatic, then we can hear “Racism and Culture” as saying the following: *In the colonial context, class as a relation of production is overdetermined by the race structure as an extraeconomic relationship of domination reminiscent of slavery, and as a mode of social closure and exclusion analogous to caste.* And “Concerning Violence” suggests that this complex structure finds its quintessential expression in apartheid, the colonizers' preferred mode of social production and political arrangement.

But these texts appear to be saying more than this. They imply that the massive intervention of race into the determination of social relations of production, at once displacing and exacerbating conventional questions of exploitation and injustice, in fact exemplifies the law of absolute limitation that governs every manner of exchange, every circuit of interaction, from the material to the affective and the communicative, between the colonizers and the colonized. The absolute constancy of the “dividing line” means that all attempts by the colonized, or specific social agents among them, to pursue these exchanges in the belief that “the world will open”—that these attempts are doomed to failure. No transracial intersubjectivity can result from these material and symbolic exchanges, for “it is precisely the opening of oneself to the other that is organically excluded from

the colonial situation" (SR, 73; DC, 89). The wish to be "closer to the white man" and to be "distanced from the black" will, of course, instigate a morbid will to repressive power and dominance over your fellow colonized subject, the desire "to lord it over this nigger trash as an unchallenged master" (PN, 40; BS, 26; RT). But in relation to the power of the colonizer securely lodged in a separate space, this must remain a futile journey of self-alienation.

Undoubtedly this doomed strategy of contesting the "dividing line" is the characteristic project of the *évolués*, "the national bourgeoisie," the "affranchised slaves," as these pretenders to equal citizenship in a transracial linguistic and moral community are unflatteringly described (DT, 25; WE, 60). Nevertheless, the impulse that animates this fantasy of transcendence—the impulse to take the colonizer's place—is one that "Concerning Violence" generalizes for all colonized subjects, irrespective of class, gender, and ethnicity. Still, this shared aspiration finds expression in differing class-specific forms. In a series of memorable tableaux, the text portrays the characteristic ways in which subaltern classes among the colonized also confront the condition of confinement and coarctation. And these strategies of the subaltern classes, though perhaps less delusional than the putative black bourgeois' dream of crossing the "dividing line" by masking the self in borrowed garb, are no less pathological, violent, and self-destructive. We would be quickly disabused of our expectations if we imagined that the undisguised contempt for the class project of "the mimic men" bristling in this text must lead to an embrace of the people's dreams. No, these tableaux tell the story of reactive motions on the part of the subaltern that, far from signifying a revolutionary release of bodies and minds, represent the desperate activities in which "the most acute aggressivity and the most impelling violence are canalized, transformed and conjured away" (DT, 22; WE, 57). They tell the story of desire emptied of the last illusion of consummation, of an aggression that is, in consequence, turned inward, against other colonized subjects.

The details of this narrative of misdirected violence, realized with a terrifying beauty, are the disconcerting work of a physician of the spirit and a poet of the body. They are also, for anyone who follows the daily news from the townships of apartheid, uncannily prophetic. Among "the patterns of avoidance" portrayed are the activation of inter-ethnic animosities, sexual violence, the immersion of the psyche in magic, superstition, and rituals of possession. One detail in par-

ticular stands out as an exemplary study in the physiopsychology of an oppressed people's cultural performances, nothing less than a clinical poetics of the body permitted to move in oblivious freedom from the tyrannizing jurisdiction of the "dividing line." I am speaking of the breathtaking portrait of "the phenomenon of the dance and possession":

The circle of the dance is a permissive circle: it protects and permits. At certain times on certain days, men and women come together at a given place, and there, under the solemn eye of the tribe, fling themselves into a seemingly unorganized pantomime, which is in reality extremely systematic, in which by various means—shakes of the head, bending of the spinal column, throwing of the whole body backwards—may be deciphered as if in an open book the huge effort of a community to exorcise itself, to liberate itself, to explain itself. There are no limits—inside the circle. The hillock up which you have toiled as if to be nearer to the moon; the river bank down which you slip as if to show the connection between the dance and the ablutions, cleansing and purification—these are sacred places. There are no limits—for in reality your purpose in coming together is to allow the accumulated libido, the hampered aggressivity to dissolve as in a volcanic eruption. Symbolical killings, fantastic rides, imaginary mass murders—all must be brought out. The evil humours are undammed, and flow away with a din as of molten lava. (DT, 22; WE, 57)

If ever there was a situation in which "culture ceased to be 'played,'" as Huizinga said of the repression of the "ludic" spirit in the cultural life of modernity¹⁰⁶—this is it. For like Freud's description of the generic human phenomenon of the *holiday*, whose psychopathological function here assumes hypertropic proportions, the dance of the colonized is "a permitted, or rather prescribed excess, a solemn violation of a prohibition."¹⁰⁷ The text thus debunks the Senghorian ideology according to which the dance is the quintessential expression of a specifically African way of being-in-the-world. From this perspective, the political pathogenesis of the dance signifies a fundamental distortion of the ludic quality and aesthetic purpose of all the cultural expressions of colonized humanity: the function of a repressive desublimation, the dance is a testimony not to the creative freedom of a people but to the futility of their dreams of action; evidence that "the area of culture," like all existential spaces

in the colonial world, is “delimited by fences and sign-posts,” coercive structures which reduce the expressive activities of human beings to compulsive gestures, to “defence mechanisms of the most elementary type, comparable for more than one good reason to the simple instinct for preservation.” That is why an authentic, postcolonial “national culture” must be radically different from the symbolic forms fabricated in the colonial era. For notwithstanding the husk of indigenism, the culture of the colonized is an alienated culture, a “contested culture” condemned to a surreptitious gratification and deflection of the impulse for transgression (DT, 167–168; WE, 236–237).

Thus, the reactive practices of the colonized—from the speech acts and cultural masquerade of the “national bourgeoisie,” to the internecine conflicts of the subaltern and the solemn ecstasy of their dance—are so many manifestations of misdirected aggressivity, so many botched acts of transcendence in the context of life lived in captive space. “Concerning Violence” detects in them a common pathology, one that cuts across differences of class, gender, ethnicity, and region. True, a class or a gender analysis of these practices is possible, for “the reactions of the colonized are not univocal.” But so “total and simplifying” is colonial domination, so stark and rigid its mode of social division, that “the defensive attitudes” of all colonized subjects have a “common character” (DT, 166, 167; WE, 236, 237).

And concerning these common characteristics of reactive attitudes to colonial coercion, Fanon’s narrative registers a deep ambivalence, if not a dark foreboding. It does so by exploiting the inner ambiguity of the term that names the intended goal of these reactive motions: *substitution*. A revealing passage offers an internal gloss on this term and the project it describes:

The colonizer’s world is a hostile world, which spurns the colonized, but at the same time it is a world which inspires envy. We have seen that the colonized always dreams of putting himself in the place of the colonizer—not of becoming the colonizer but of substituting himself for the colonizer. This hostile world, oppressive and invasive because it fends off the colonized masses with all the harshness it is capable of, represents not the hell from which the swiftest flight possible is desirable, but a paradise close at hand which is guarded by terrible watchdogs. (DT, 18–19; WE, 52–53)

What unconscious ends does this description discern in the collective struggles of the colonized? A radical refusal of the Other, an "absolute substitution" (in the language of the opening pages of *The Wretched of the Earth*), or a mimetic replication of the colonizer? We are led to suspect the latter possibility by the disturbing parody of the famous utterance in Sartre's *No Exit* with which the passage ends; the Other, far from signifying a frightening hell, is indeed an alluring object, his "forbidden city [*les villes interdites*]" is an earthly paradise.

In one sense this tragic irony of the colonial subject's struggles over spatial domains reminds us of the limits that Marx discerned in the struggles of the proletariat over the length of the working day. Just as the proletariat's struggles over time do not in their immediacy constitute a revolutionary transcendence of "the narrow horizon of bourgeois right," just as these struggles are in fact complicit with the law of value and the covert injustice of its standard of equity, so the struggles of the colonized to cross the "dividing line" assent to what *Black Skin, White Masks* calls the "axiological" structure of the black-white relation (PN, 193; BS, 214). These are struggles not so much to abolish the hierarchical order but rather to attain the valued term, struggles to acquire "the colonizer's position of status" (DT, 25; WE, 60). This would amount to changing "the fixed position" of the colonized, without, as Baudrillard would put it, "breaking the code."¹⁰⁸

What would a radical revolution entail, one commensurate with the project of "complete and absolute substitution" heralded by the opening sentences of "Concerning Violence"? The text tells us with shocking candor that it would entail the death of the colonizer: "To break up the colonial world does not mean that after the frontiers have been abolished lines of communication will be set up between the two zones. The destruction of the colonial world is no more and no less than the abolition of one zone, its burial in the depths of the earth or its expulsion from the country" (DT, 9-10; WE, 41).

The death of the colonizer; the elimination of the zone which signified the principle of racial supremacy, indeed the principle of race as such. A human community will no longer be subject to the "dichotomy" which has conditioned its hopes and fears. This is the awesome news: a resurgent people irrevocably makes "a radical decision to remove from it its heterogeneity"—that is to say, to recover its self-coincidence (DT, 13; WE, 45-45). In so doing, it is set

free to face the prospects and perils native to the human condition in all their local variety, rather than submit to forcible and false choices dictated by "this narrow world" which is the colonial world.

This is not the end of history. It is not even the end of prehistory. It is quite simply the pure act, a radical deed unanswerable, it would seem, to the austere ordinances of dialectical necessity. "Concerning Violence" proclaims this utter freedom of the anticolonial revolt from the constraints of legislated ends, the telos of History, by saying that for the colonized "this violence represents absolute praxis [*la praxis absolue*]" (DT, 44; WE, 85). This is the text's "concluding unscientific postscript," its scandalous rejoinder to the canon, to historical materialism's foundational teaching. "Labour," according to that teaching, "is the living, form-giving force; it is the transitoriness of things, their temporality, as their formation by living time."¹⁰⁹ For this day-to-day disclosure of human agency and the temporality of created things through work, Fanon's text substitutes the brutal and instantaneous revelation of the colonizer's impermanence through violence. The colonizer's impermanence, but also the shared and sobering finitude of the human condition. Whereas the *Theses on Feuerbach* see in the diurnal course of "sensuous human activity" the habit of "revolutionizing practice," "Concerning Violence" finds in the violent recognition of the colonizer's earthly humanity "a fundamental upheaval in the world" (DT, 13; WE, 45: RT). It would indeed be no exaggeration to say that all the value attributes which the materialist dialectic ascribes to the labor of our hands Fanon's text, acceding to the voice of "immediate experience," irreverently assigns to violence (DT, 36; WE, 74). For the colonized, it is not work—"the harsh school of labour" which, according to historical materialism, nurtures the proletariat's practical reason and class capacities—but violence that is the school of action. It is violence that "enlightens the agent by teaching him the relation of means to ends" (DT, 45; WE, 86: RT). It is, again, violence, not cooperation forced upon the laboring class at the point of production, that forges among the oppressed the consciousness of a shared condition and the habit of solidarity. For the colonized, the text declares in a flaunting gesture of iconoclasm, violence "constitutes their only work" (DT, 51; WE, 93). This is their *Bildung*, this the sole source of their enlightenment. It is in the compelling immediacies of *this* "work," this "violent praxis," not the immanent structure and history of social labor, that the colonized will discover the efficient cause of their liberty.

THE DIVIDING LINE AS THE "DIVIDED LINE"?

The colonized can see in an absolute immediacy if decolonization has come to pass or not.

—FANON, *The Wretched of the Earth*

The world of our sight is like the habitation in prison.

—PLATO, *Republic*

Is this, then, the whole story that Fanon's texts have to tell, this reduction of experience to the grim instantaneities of racial bondage and insurrection? This studied abstraction of history from the drama of production and the bonds of class—to say nothing of other configurations of social being—as the foundation of human existence, action, and knowledge? Fanon's Marxist critics are convinced that this is the case. But could it be that according to "Concerning Violence," the "dividing line," the cause of this intransigent discourse, signifies something more than the imprisonment of a people in a confining space? Could it be that this text says of the "dividing line" what *Black Skin, White Masks* says of the principle of race with which it is indeed synonymous: to wit, that it is the "governing fiction" of a colonized society (PN, 195; BS, 215)? Could it be that in serving this function the "dividing line" may also be seen as a version of that emblematic figure of metaphysics—namely, the "divided line" of Plato's *Republic*?¹¹⁰ The *dividing line* as the *divided line*: the line that separates the obscuring transparency of "immediate experience," not this time from the awesome incandescence of a serene and steady Being, but rather from the rich and perplexing truths of human existence.

Half a century before Fanon, W. E. B. Du Bois captured in an arresting imagery this double impress of the "dividing line" ("the problem of the color-line," in Du Bois' locution):¹¹¹ its function as a sign of social separation and its effect as an order of epistemic closure. In a language that is at once prefigurative of Fanon and reminiscent of Plato, Du Bois wrote of the "color-line" that it was "a matter of segregation, of hindrance and inhibitions," of incarceration in a "dark cave" wherein "entombed souls are hindered in their natural movement, expression and development."¹¹² But the "color-line," Du Bois protested, was also an obstinate and impermeable "veil," "some thick sheet of invisible but horribly tangible plate glass" that obstructs not only the path of transracial communication

but also an adequate understanding of “our essential and common humanity.”¹¹³ And years later, after the emperor had been officially defrocked of the “uniform” of racial supremacy in that act of ritual desecration which is political independence, the historian Christopher Fyfe, looking back, would say of the principle of race which governed colonial rule that it was “a gigantic confidence trick.”¹¹⁴ A gigantic confidence trick that worked, as Fyfe explains, “in keeping colonial Africa under control”—that is to say, in fixing the geography of social power, but also, let it be added, in severely constricting the compass of human self-knowledge.

Earlier in this study I suggested that Fanon’s texts contain signal instances of self-critical ventriloquy, signposts of an ironizing commentary upon their own representations. I took my cue from an utterance in “Concerning Violence” that comes in the wake of an ostensibly truculent and conclusive reduction of the “question of truth” to the historical imperatives of a racial or a national community’s will to power: “In every age, among the people, truth is the property of the national cause. No absolute verity, no discourse on the purity of the soul, can shake this position. *To the lie of the colonial situation the colonized reply with an equal falsehood*” (DT, 17; WE, 50, my emphasis: RT). I construe this utterance to be a paradigmatic commentary on the discourse of “immediate knowledge,” and a prefigurement of exacting epistemic and political struggles that await postcolonial humanity. It is time to substantiate this claim.

3

BEWILDERING ENLIGHTENMENT

The clear, unreal, idyllic light of the beginning is followed by a semi-darkness that bewilders the senses.

—FANON, *The Wretched of the Earth*

“All truth is simple.”—Is that not a compound lie?

—NIETZSCHE, *Twilight of the Idols*

Discussions about dialectic are like an attempt to explain a surging fountain in terms of the stagnant waters of the sewer.

—HEIDEGGER, *Hegel's Concept of Experience*

NARRATIVE, CATASTASIS, DIALECTIC

The introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks* describes the “architecture” of the text as one framed by “temporality,” because “every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time” (PN, 30; BS, 14–15). So it is with *The Wretched of the Earth*. A bifocal temporal vision, its searching gaze fixed upon the dying colonialism and the dawning prospects of the emergent nation, irradiates this text, imparting to it its ardent hope but also its acerbic indignation and tragic sense. For this is a prophetic picture of the lingering past, one that devoutly desires the transfiguration of a people whose searing history it narrates, but one that fears, terribly fears, their continued degradation. It is also a retrospective portrait of the nascent future, addressing to it elegiac remonstrances of “what might have been,” given the depths from which it sprang. The Nietzschean exhilaration with which Fanon greets the violent death of the colonizer and the sublime splendor of the sun of independence is due to his apprehension of racial bondage as the very abyss of human

abjection. Yet it is that same harrowing image of the past which throws into full relief the monstrosity of forms of tyranny and predation that were being hatched right at the beginning of the decade of independence—even as Fanon's text went to press. Could these incipient horrors have been kept from early detection by the manner in which the anticolonial movement understood its causes and its ends?

When "Concerning Violence" asserts with unedited certitude that "the colonized can see in an absolute immediacy if decolonization has come to pass or not," it proffers as the measure of victorious decolonization the Africanization of positions (DT, 13–14; WE, 46: RT). Undoing the "fixed position" of the colonized by elevating representatives of the formerly subjugated people to precedence in the political, managerial, and administrative offices of the new nation: this is racialized nationalism's understanding of the principle of justice. Presently, the text will subject to a corrosive inspection this evidence of the senses and the narrow horizon of moral reasoning it yields. That which from the standpoint of immediate knowledge counts as irrefutable proof of successful decolonization comes to be seen in a radically new light. Africanization, according to this disenchanting view, is nothing more nor less than the product of the "defensive racism" of a fledgling national bourgeoisie intent on setting up "a national system of exploitation" (DT, 107; WE, 163–164).

Is there a line of filiation between this "national system of exploitation" and what "Concerning Violence" called "the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation"? Is it possible that the rise of predatory and repressive regimes in the postcolonial world is no bizarre excrescence of colonial history but its determinate consequence? Yet to see such a map of historical filiation—call it a *dialectical genealogy*—in Fanon's texts poses the question of their epistemological identity. For would such a dialectical genealogy of the postcolonial condition not constitute a challenge to the manifestly *antinarrativist* stance (in Hayden White's sense of the term) characteristic of depictions of racial bondage and insurrection in the colonial world?¹ We may recall that this antinarrativist discourse appears to confront us with isolate temporal instants, oppressive structures imposed by abrupt events, precipitate and visceral reactions. Above all, it confronts us with binary oppositions: first, of the colonizers and the colonized; second, of the abject captivity of an undifferenti-

ated collectivity—the colonized—and the resurrection of their human agency in one violent epiphany.

The question is: How can such a dualistic dramaturgy ever *account* for the project of liberation? How can it answer the challenge enjoined by Sartre in “Materialism and Revolution” upon every philosophy of revolution “to explain the possibility of this movement of transcendence”?² Sartre’s intent in posing that challenge was to rescue the explanation of the revolutionary project from the mechanistic determinism of vulgar Marxism, and to harness it to a subjective freedom which is antecedent to liberation. It was in this spirit that Francis Jeanson wrote that for the harried and cowering creatures portrayed by Fanon “to undertake to free themselves, they must already, in some sense, be free,” free regardless . . .³ This is true. But prompted by this nagging suspicion that objectivist determinism and claims for the paramountcy of subjective freedom are rival siblings, I shall look in Fanon’s texts for a somewhat different version of the conundrum of the upsurge of agency and narrativity in a universe from which they are allegedly exiled. The existentialist Jeanson asks: How can the consciousness of freedom be snatched from the experience of supine servitude? I would like to ask: How can meaning ever emerge from absolute contingency and the radical deed of an anchorless will? If, as Fanon’s text would presently claim, it is the destiny of the nascent citizen to attain, by dint of a painful enlightenment, “rational knowledge” of the postcolonial condition (DT, 92; WE, 145), then how on earth can such a “rational knowledge” make its appearance in the wake of a wholly “absurd drama” of the colonial context and its indeterminate negation by the spontaneous violence of an undifferentiated collectivity? Otherwise put: How can one sustain this antinarrativist attitude to colonial history without condemning postcolonial history and its horrors to the status of what Engels, deriding irrationalist perceptions of history, called “a wild whirl of senseless deeds of violence”?⁴

This seems to me to be the conundrum which “Concerning Violence” confronts and attempts to resolve prefiguratively when, as we noticed in the last chapter, it rewrites its initial description of history as an act without process, a discrete event that is, as it were, its own cause. Let us recall that redescription: “Decolonization, as we know, is a *historical process*: that is to say, that it cannot be comprehended, it cannot disclose its intelligibility nor become transparent to itself except in the exact measure that we discern *the movement of histori-*

cal becoming [*le mouvement historicisant*] which gives it form and content" (DT, 6; WE, 36, my emphasis: RT). The problem broached by this revision of the rhetoric of transformation and its temporality is this: Is it possible to impute to the story of decolonization a narrative structure, one that recognizes in it an intelligible process endowed with determinate causes and effects bearing the marks of their historicity—"le mouvement historicisant"—without embracing, through a simple inversion of the standpoint of immediate knowledge, an allegorical reading of postcolonial history as an instantiation of some transcendental history? This is *our* search for a method: a dialectical genealogy with normative commitments trained to detect counterfeit and repressive universalisms, but also chastened by the postcolonial experience into a perpetual vigilance against the specious and convenient particularisms of the "national bourgeoisie."⁵ On the way to this discourse that is yet to be founded, we may be guided by a reading of *The Wretched of the Earth* as an exemplary phenomenology of the historical consciousness as it wrestles with the compelling claims of "immediate knowledge" and learns to see more intricate constellations of social and moral "truth."

The immediate successor to "immediate knowledge" simply replaces its adamant understanding of truth as a function of the racial and national cause, with the ascription of truth and falsehood to contending class positions and projects. Otherwise put: the immediate successor to the standpoint of immediacy is a version of class reductionism. The ensuing story of the movement of experience, however, makes manifest a texture of social realities so riddled with ambiguity as to resist subsumption under imperial and pure universals.

For if the standpoint of immediate knowledge does not purport to legislate for all critical understanding of history and social being, neither is its self-transcendence presented as submission to the authority of necessary truths. Nowhere in Fanon's texts do we encounter the advocacy or refusal of dialectical narrative as an *a priori* epistemological principle. Rather, we are made to witness the occasion of dialectical understanding. We are made to witness critical moments in the journey of collective experience, when it is constrained by the baffling collapse of naturalized, evident racial solidarities to wonder about the constitutive relations of the social world, indeed to begin to apprehend the social world as a tangled web of complex, historically constructed relations.

According to the standpoint of immediacy, the colonial world is marked by a unique mode of division, one made transparent by the spatial arrangement of social and existential positions. "The colonial context" is said to be "characterized by the dichotomy which it imposes upon the whole people." Correspondingly, the anticolonial revolt would be ostensibly simple, transparent, "unmediated" in its principle of organization: "This approach to the colonial world, its ordering and its geographical lay-out will allow us to make out the lines on which a decolonized society will be reorganized." An insurrectionary people, "deciding to embody history by dint of action, surges into the forbidden quarters." Through a mimetic inversion of the colonial structure, "decolonization unifies [the colonized] people by the radical decision to remove from it its heterogeneity, and by unifying it on a national, sometimes a racial basis" (DT, 7, 9, 13; WE, 38, 40, 45-46). With a studied complicity, "Concerning Violence" relives this absolutist will to unity. Reenacting the breathtaking and self-mystifying hyperbole of nationalist discourse, it says of this privileged and delusional moment that "individualism is the first to disappear." The perverse "idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity" is excreted from the moral organism. In its place: a radically "different vocabulary" of intersubjective relations, that of "brother, sister, friend"—a language of the affective community that is inescapably suggested by the organizational forms of nationalist political practice, to say nothing of the lethal contempt in which colonialist violence and repression hold the principle of individuation. "Henceforward," we are told, "the interests of one will be the interests of all, for in the concrete fact everyone will be discovered by the troops, everyone will be massacred—or everyone will be saved. The motto 'shit for yourself,' the atheist method of salvation, is in this context forbidden" (DT, 14-15, WE, 47: RT). The fear of death is here vanquished by the desperate bonds of insurrectionary conspiracy. Hegel's slave, fearful and trembling before the master yesterday, is this time transfigured on the morrow not by enduring evidences of his solitary work but by a General Will forged *in extremis*. Such is the entrancing image, and self-understanding, of nationalism's revolutionary moment repeatedly evoked by the text.

However, the internal revision of the rhetoric of transformation, the redescription of decolonization as the outcome of a *historical process*, entails a family of refashioned terms of critical under-

standing. They herald, these refashioned terms, a catastasis, a complication of the plot. They qualify the symbolism of an instantaneous refusal by a mystical community of suffering. They acknowledge what the collectivist and voluntarist idiom denies: that decolonization is in some sense a negotiation of contending terms for ending the pure colony, terms bearing differing social signatures. The rebellion of race is, in truth, waged as a political class struggle and is individuated as rival class projects, among them the project of transforming the colony into the neocolony through the judicious rearrangement of economic, political, and symbolic relations. Indeed, no sooner does the panegyric to the death of individualism end than the narrative records its return in the shape of the class interests of a mean-spirited and predatory "national bourgeoisie":

Spoilt children of yesterday's colonialism and today's national governments, they organize the loot of whatever national resources exist. Without pity, they use today's national distress as a means of getting on through scheming and legal robbery . . . They are insistent in their demands for the nationalization of commerce, that is to say the reservation of markets and advantageous bargains for nationals only. As far as doctrine is concerned, they proclaim the pressing necessity of nationalizing the robbery of the nation. In this arid phase of national life, the so-called period of austerity, the success of their depredations is swift to call forth the violence and anger of the people. For this same people, poverty-stricken yet independent, comes very quickly to possess a *social consciousness* in the African and international context of today; and this *the petty individualists* will quickly learn. (DT, 15-16; WE, 48-49, my emphasis: RT)

What ever happened to the rapturous communitarianism lauded a moment ago? How could it be so easily dissipated the day after independence? A veritable peripeteia, or an inexorable disaster of which we had more than a little presentiment? The answer is that this outcome had been foreseen in the narrative, some time before an enchanted wish fulfillment prematurely administered funeral rites to the culture of possessive individualism. It had not escaped notice that into the allegedly univocal aspirations of the anticolonial nationalists before independence, into their "minimum demand" that "the last shall be the first," the fledgling national bourgeoisie brought discordant "variants," class versions of a postcolonial principle of

justice (DT, 14; WE, 46). The full-blown dictatorship of the “kleptocratic bourgeoisie” after independence was prefigured in the prelude to independence when established and emergent elites thought they would best represent the general will of the race by scrambling for promotions or exclusive positions in the institutions of the state and civil society. The romance of unanimity, it turns out, was always suspect. In place of a clean slate upon which a renascent citizenry, each and all, were to compose in unison a new history, we now have a muddled picture of complicities and continuities forged by class interests between the dying colonialism and the emergent postcolonial order. The result, the text tells us, is the resurgence among the “poverty-stricken” people of “*social consciousness*,” the insurrection of the subjugated knowledge of class. The end of “the unanimist illusion,” as Paulin Hountondji would call it,⁶ is the beginning of the faculty of making critical distinctions among social projects for which identifiable protagonists can be held accountable. And its signal consequence is that the provisionally indeterminate category of decolonization itself undergoes a division between “true and false decolonization.”

Truth and falsehood as predicates of class projects, and to that extent transcending collective national and racial claims! It will be recalled that “Concerning Violence” had earlier dramatized—and satirized—the inverted Manicheism, the antiracist racism, of nationalist discourse and its critique of universals. From the standpoint of immediacy which frames that discourse, the critique of truth can be only an absolute refusal of the idea of the absolute—nothing more than a relativist parody of universals as the epistemic claims of a particular people, be it a racial group or a national community, in the blatant exercise of its will to power. By contrast, an incipient dialectical critique of truth would renounce the relativist fallacy, vindicate the distinction between truth and falsehood as functions of class practices, more precisely as ascertainable properties of the politics of class.

Such a critique is adumbrated by an attempt to identify true and false modes of decolonization with rival class projects, to ascertain the determinate social agents representative of the one or the other, and even to broach the classical Marxist inquiry into the objective conditions or the historical preparedness of a social order for transformation. Race reductionism in epistemology and ethics sanctioned by a reactive mimesis of “the primary Manicheism which governed

colonial society" now yields to the idiomatic questions and verification procedures of historical materialism, questions and procedures dictated by what a resurrected totalizing discourse calls "History":

Nowadays a theoretical problem of prime importance is posed, on the level of political tactics and that of History, by the liberation of the colonies: when can one affirm that the situation is ripe for a movement of national liberation? Because the processes of decolonization have assumed various forms, reason hesitates and refuses to say which is a true decolonization, and which is a false. We shall see that for the person who is in the thick of the fight it is an urgent matter to decide on the means and tactics to employ: that is to say, how to conduct and organize the movement. *If this coherence is not present there is only a blind voluntarism*, with the terrible reactionary risks which it entails. (DT, 23-24, WE, 58-59, my mine: RT)

But identifying the appropriate revolutionary strategy is dependent upon naming the determinate classes and class relations spawned by colonialism, and upon establishing causal connections between class positions and forms of political action and ideology. Precisely such a correspondence theory of class and "political formations" is invoked by the text in order to disclose the social agents of "false decolonization:"

What are the forces which in the colonial period open up new outlets and engender new aims for the violence of the colonized? In the first place there are the political parties and the intellectual or commercial elites. Now, the characteristic feature of certain political formations is that they proclaim abstract principles but refrain from issuing definite commands. The entire action of these nationalist political parties during the colonial period is action of the electoral type: a string of philosophico-political dissertations on the themes of the rights of peoples to self-determination, the rights of man to freedom from hunger and human dignity, and the unceasing affirmation of the principle: "One man, one vote." The national political parties never lay stress upon the necessity of a trial of armed strength, for the good reason that their objective is not the radical overthrowing of the system. Pacifists and legalists, they are in fact partisans of order, the new order—but to the

colonialist bourgeoisie they put bluntly enough the demand which to them is the main one: "Give us more power." On the specific question of violence, the *élite* are ambiguous. They are violent in their words and reformist in their attitudes. (DT, 24; WE, 59)

Trading the race reductionism of the standpoint of immediacy for a version of class reductionism, the text proceeds to assert that the reformist politics of the nationalist political parties "should be interpreted in the light of both the make-up of their leaders and the nature of their followings." Recruited from the ranks of workers, primary-school teachers, artisans, and small shopkeepers, the constituencies of nationalist politics seek no more than "a betterment of their particular lot" (DT, 24; WE, 60). These "affranchised slaves" intent on accommodation with colonialism are to be distinguished from "the majority of the colonized," of whom it is said that they simply "want the settler's farm. For them, there is no question of entering into competition with the colonizer. They want to take his place" (DT, 25; WE, 60-61). More specifically, the class of "affranchised slaves" is to be distinguished from the peasantry and the lumpen-proletariat, whose revolutionary will is said to be uncompromising because of their absolute exclusion from the secondary spaces of colonial privilege. We will recall the famous iconoclasm that would offend so many Marxist ears: "The peasantry is systematically disregarded for the most part by the propaganda put out by the nationalist parties. Now, it is clear that in the colonial countries the peasantry alone is revolutionary. It has nothing to lose and everything to gain. The peasant, the *déclassé*, the starving person, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possibility of coming to terms" (DT, 25; WE, 61; RT).

We are thus offered something like a class analysis of decolonization in the precise sense that the undifferentiated category "the colonized" is now broken down into the antagonistic units covered by that category. True, the classical identification of classes as organic implicates of endogenous relations of production here receives an idiosyncratic formulation, to say nothing of the heterodox selection of the peasantry and the *déclassés* as revolutionary agents. Nor is the question of the objective conditions for the revolutionary movement, the question of identifying the revolutionary situation broached by

the appeal to "History," given anything approaching a "scientific" answer. But if Fanon is unable to give us an apodictic theory of transformation vouchsafed by what he elsewhere calls an "objective dialectic" (RA, 173; AR, 170), his text reveals a self-critical desire to free the revolutionary imperative from the inverted nihilism of "*volontarisme aveugle*," the indeterminate act of an unspecified *l'homme colonisé* ascending from bondage to liberty in the kindred spirit of Camus' *l'homme révolté*. However inconclusive the answers, this desire represents an attempt to situate the revolutionary process in some knowable configuration of social space and time; it signals a retroactive transformation, so to say, in the genre of Fanon's discourse—the return of a repressed narrative that resonates with historical universals of human conflict, crisis, and regeneration.

True and false decolonization as identifiable phenomena, distinguishable by virtue of their class protagonists, strategies, and projects; the idea of the relation of truth to the class struggle rather than to the race war lived as a "national cause"; the suggestion that upon the strength of these distinctions reposes the differentiation of coherent revolutionary action from "blind voluntarism": From Jack Woddis to Jock McCulloch, Fanon's Marxist critics have almost invariably failed to grasp the import of these distinctions, to appreciate fully the extent to which Fanon's texts internally revise the preliminary image of the revolutionary movement, its causes and its ends. Prisoners of a motionless reading that ignores the dialectical path of his narrative, they suppose that Fanon, as a matter of doctrinal principle, violently reduces the complex social map of "the colonial context" to the simple "nonclass" terms of the colonizer and the colonized.⁷ The irony of this is that from another perspective—say, that of the poststructuralist social theory of Laclau and Mouffe⁸—the results of what I have referred to as the internal revision of analytical categories are likely to be charged with erring in the direction of class reductionism and a crude correspondence theory of class interests and political discourse. Far from bespeaking a happy, if inconclusive, subversion of mythology by science, Fanon's class analysis would from *this* perspective stand convicted of a familiar metaphysical will to disambiguation, one underwritten by a rationalist account of social position, political action, and ideology. And our Rortyan ironist would be even more offended or rather bemused by this turn in the rhetoric of a thinker whom Homi Bhabha has certified as "the purveyor of the transgressive and transitional

truth.” Our Rortyan antifoundationalist would deplore or rather laugh at this strange quest for a criterion with which to adjudicate the veracity of sociopolitical discourses and the moral rectitude of agents, this demand for a principle of “coherence” with which to rein in a voluntarist politics of sheer contingency. Far from being the *dramatist* of a temptation on the part of an enraged and insurgent “social consciousness” to rid itself of all ambiguity—that is to say, to name the enemy and to designate the social repository of virtue—Fanon would seem to be complicit in the worst kind of dogmatic foundationalism.

We are obliged to return to our question: Black Orpheus or logocentric Marxist? The movement of experience charted by Fanon’s text, what it calls “the weary road toward rational knowledge,” should permit us to think that our interpretive possibilities are not exhausted by these two options. For when the now manifest reality of decolonization as being, in some sense, a class struggle is traced in subsequent scenes of *The Wretched of the Earth* to its social causality, the dialectical “enlightenment” thereby secured would bear stigmata of ambiguity offensive to the logocentric Marxist, though by no means attractive to devotees of the “black soul.”

“THE WEARY ROAD TOWARD RATIONAL KNOWLEDGE”

Knowledge in its first phase, or *immediate Spirit*, is the non-spiritual, i.e. sense-consciousness. In order to become genuine knowledge . . . it must travel a long way and work its passage.

—G. W. F. HEGEL, *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Once more I am invoking Hegel in order to make sense of Fanon’s narrative. And once more I must confess to being troubled by the charge that, leaving aside the little matter of the monumental racism and sexism of his metaphysics and philosophy of history, Hegel is “the last philosopher of the book”—albeit “the first thinker of writing.”⁹ Is he not eminently suspect, if not downright pernicious, as a guide for interpreting a vision of a world, the postcolonial world, for which, in the words of a perceptive topographer, “aporia may well be the master trope”?¹⁰ I hear that query. In recognition of its rightful suspicions, I have advisedly left out of the above citation of Hegel’s text his parenthetical but in fact emphatic comment to the effect that the appointed destiny of “immediate Spirit,” if it is to

become “genuine knowledge,” is “to beget the element of Science which is the pure Notion of Science itself.”¹¹ I believe that the movement of Fanon’s narrative justifies the citation and the elision.

There comes a moment in the story of decolonization and the gestation of the postcolonial order when the critical judgment won by virtue of the resurgent knowledge of class must join in a climactic battle for authority with recalcitrant traces of the standpoint of immediacy. As when the protagonists of *A Grain of Wheat* are, on the eve of independence, called upon to confess their duplicities and complicities, to divulge the secret histories of their personal and public existence in a cathartic act of self-disclosure,¹² so Fanon’s text presents this scene as a decisive settling of accounts with the discourse of race and the truths it silences or represses or masks. It is, I am almost tempted to say, a dramatic settling of accounts with the African Ideology. For we are here witnesses to a crisis of experience and naming, a crisis of identifying forms of separation and subjugation, inequities and iniquities—but also configurations of social solidarity and moral community—in a language other than that of race and the racial divide. Already made manifest are the differing political relations of specific social agents to the colonial regime, and the class character of the membership, goals, and strategies of the national liberation movement. On the eve of independence, however, a more traumatizing drama of recognition occurs. In a scene that at once resonates with rationalist optimism and a tragic sensibility, the beginnings of this drama of recognition are depicted as a “progressive enlightenment of consciousness” and an “advance on the pathway of knowledge of the history of societies [*ces éclairages successifs de la conscience, ce cheminement dans la voie de la connaissance de l’histoire des sociétés*]” (DT, 90; WE, 143). It is as if enlightenment consists in an enriching yet unsettling acquisition of a critical idiom that apprehends the panorama of local history as an instance of the disquieting universals of human history. And the first fruit of this exacting education in human things is that the divisions which have already sprouted within the original unity of the racial-national cause begin to assume determinate lines and shapes.

A regionalist opposition of town versus country is the language in which consciousness of internal contradictions is provisionally voiced. The city’s cultural and political complicity with the dying colonialism, its desultory display of public-spiritedness in the national

liberation movement, reactivates an antagonism between town and country peculiar to the colonial order:

The peasants threw themselves into the rebellion with all the more enthusiasm in that they had never stopped clutching at a way of life which was in practice anti-colonial. From all eternity, by means of manifold tricks and through a system of checks and balances reminiscent of a conjurer's most successful sleight-of-hand, the country people had more or less kept their individuality free from colonial impositions. They even believed that colonialism was not the victor. The peasant's pride, his hesitation to go down into the towns and to mingle with the world that the foreigner had built, his perpetual shrinking back at the approach of the agents of colonial administration: all these reactions signified that to the dual world of the settler he opposed his own dichotomy. (DT, 87; WE, 138-139)

The recognition that there is more to the story of social antagonism than the colonizer-colonized dichotomy renders questionable "that spectacular voluntarism" which supposed that "all portions of the nation" would be transfigured "without transition" and without dissension from common bondage to sovereign citizenship (DT, 86-87; WE, 138).¹³

One step further, and the *spatial* dichotomy of town and country disfiguring the immediate unity of the collective will is seen to be symptomatic of a more fundamental *social* division. There is a growing recognition that the lines of the political class struggle and the differing attitudes of town and country have deeper roots in socioeconomic relations construed as antagonistic and exploitative relations of distribution. The narrative registers this manifestation of "particular interests" in what Paul Ricoeur might call a "mixed discourse":¹⁴ a materialist understanding sees in this collision of interests an inescapable law of "the history of societies"; an idealist Rousseauistic language denounces it as a repugnant betrayal of the common good. The reader's indulgence is requested for the following lengthy but crucial citation from "Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness."

The towns keep silent, and their continuing their daily humdrum life gives the peasant the bitter impression that a whole sector of

the nation is content to sit on the side line. Such proofs of indifference disgust the peasants and strengthen their tendency to condemn the townfolk as a whole. The political educator ought to lead them to modify this attitude by getting them to understand that certain fractions of the population have particular interests and that these do not always coincide with the national interest. The people will thus come to understand that national independence sheds light upon multiple realities which are sometimes divergent and antagonistic. Such a taking stock of the situation at this precise moment of the struggle is decisive, for it allows the people to pass from total, indiscriminating nationalism to social and economic consciousness. The people who at the beginning of the struggle had adopted the primitive Manicheism of the settler—Blacks and Whites, Arabs and Christians—realize as they go along that it sometimes happens that you get Blacks who are whiter than the Whites and that the fact of having a national flag and the hope of an independent nation does not always tempt certain strata of the population to give up their interests or privileges. The people come to realize that natives like themselves do not lose sight of the main chance, but quite on the contrary seem to make use of the war in order to strengthen their material situation and their growing power. Certain natives continue to profiteer and exploit the war, making their gains at the expense of the people, who as usual are prepared to sacrifice everything, and water their native soil with their blood. The militant who faces the colonialist war machine with the bare minimum of arms realizes that while he is breaking down colonial oppression he is building up automatically yet another system of exploitation. This discovery is unpleasant, bitter, and sickening; and yet everything seemed to be so simple before: the bad people were on one side, and the good on the other. *The clear, unreal idyllic light of the beginning is followed by a semi-darkness that bewilders the senses.* The people find out that the iniquitous fact of exploitation can wear a black face, or an Arab one; and they raise the cry of "Treason!" But the cry is mistaken; and the mistake must be corrected. The treason is not national, it is social. The people must be taught to cry "Stop thief!" *In their weary road toward rational knowledge the people must also give up their too-simple conception of their overlords.* The species is breaking up under their very eyes. As they look around them, they notice that certain settlers do not join in the general guilty hysteria; there are differences in the same species.

Such men, who before were included without distinction and indiscriminately in the monolithic mass of the foreigner's presence, actually go so far as to condemn the colonial war. The scandal explodes when the prototypes of this division of the species go over to the enemy, become blacks or Arabs, and accept suffering, torture, and death. (DT, 91-92; WE, 144-145, my emphasis: RT)

Dialectical enlightenment that resolves "all mysteries which mislead theory into mysticism," as the eighth thesis on Feuerbach would have it? Or a benumbing recognition, anagnorisis, presaging tragedy? True, the rigid simplicities and obscuring transparency of race relations and the "dividing line" have now been cruelly displaced. How often does the text invoke the name of reason as the victor in this battle for recognition? "The battle of reason," wrote Hegel, "is the struggle to break up the rigidity to which the understanding has reduced everything."¹⁵ Reason's triumph, the faculty of dialectical disclosure, is in Fanon achieved experientially through a corrosive destruction of the rigidity and simplicity to which a racialized apprehension of the world had reduced everything. Thanks to this "bitter discovery" of exploitative relations and distributive injustice as intraracial facts, as human, all-too-human possibilities, the nascent postcolonial subject is ready for a veritable political and epistemic reorientation. In what reads like a prophetic admonition to the Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa with its slogan "One settler, one bullet," the text registers a new understanding of identity and difference consequent upon the revelation of family secrets:

The settler is not simply the person who must be killed. Many members of the mass of colonialists reveal themselves to be closer, infinitely closer to the nationalist struggle than certain sons of the nation. *The racial and racist standard of judgment is transcended in both senses* [*Le niveau racial et raciste est dépassé dans les deux sens*]: You no longer issue a badge of authenticity to every black person and every Moslem. You no longer look for the gun or the knife no matter which settler makes his appearance. (DT, 93; WE, 146, my emphasis: RT)

It is no sentimental desire to forgive the Other that evokes and endorses this critical transcendence of "the primitive Manicheism of the colonizer." Certainly at this juncture of the narrative, the designated beneficiaries of this agonizing deracialization of social con-

sciousness are none other than the colonized themselves on the threshold of their ambiguous liberation. It is for their collective introspection that Fanon the narrator welcomes an end to the history of a racist metaphysics of good and evil. It is in order that the nascent postcolonial humanity may relive the native maelstrom of social existence that Fanon's narrative rejoices, not this time in the death of the colonizer, but in the death of race as the principle of moral judgment. Accordingly, the outcome of this momentous collapse of the immediate knowledge of difference and identity is not going to be a classically Hegelian closed and finished shape of the absolute, but something considerably more finite, enigmatic, aporetic: "*Consciousness arduously dawns upon truths that are only partial, limited, and unstable*" (ibid.; my emphasis: RT).

The text calls this event of unsettling disclosure *violence*. It is violence no longer in the sense of the antidialectic which, according to "Concerning Violence," "ruled over the ordering of the colonial world." Nor is it simply the avenging violence—"un juste retour des choses"—by means of which the colonized in revolt "wreck the colonial world." We are in the presence of a third moment and meaning of violence: violence as that "knowledge through praxis [*connaissance dans la praxis*]," that revolutionizing mode of practical reason, which shatters the myth of the people as an "undivided mass," forewarns the nascent citizenry of "all attempts at mystification," inoculates them against "all anthems to the nation," against the "carnival" of unanimity (DT, 94; WE, 147: RT). Out of this wrenching hermeneutical event and its consequences—the smouldering debris of shattered veils—the postcolonial subject, we are assured, will forge the "key" to the book of the social world, come into possession of the means with which to "decipher social reality" (ibid.: RT).

Some assurance! Some "key"! True, the text intermittently speaks in the familiar accents of Enlightenment rationalism, expressing faith in the people's renewed capacity to grasp internal relations among particulars and universals. In this connective practice, it suggests, is to be found evidence of the "rationality" of the fledgling politics: "The rebellion gives proof of its rationality each time it uses a particular case to advance the people's consciousness" (DT, 93; WE, 146: RT). But the product of this kind of rational knowledge will not be a transparent totality, a seamless community of truth, but rather "*les nuances*," troubling "shades of meaning" (ibid.). Indeed, the text

anticipates the dread of creative uncertainty and tension manufactured by postcolonial authoritarian regimes, advocates of the single party state and the like, but also harbored by well-meaning but misguided metaphysicians of seamless solidarity—the entire extended family of practitioners of antipolitical politics. To all these devotees of populist simplicity and stainless unanimism who fear that this opening up of the text of the social world and the ensuing emergence of “multiple realities” and divergent “shades of meaning” would subvert the cozy unity of the “popular bloc,” Fanon answers with an insistence on the legitimacy of the principles distilled from the struggle for national liberation and from the worldwide struggle for human emancipation. However divisive, these principles speak to the contending and contestable material terms of social and political life. The upsurge of a discriminating, even schismatic, “social consciousness” makes possible a politics that is “national, revolutionary and social” (DT, 94; WE, 147).¹⁶

But we cannot let this rationalist (or is it Romantic?) rhetoric of revelatory division and enlightening rifts go without question. What manner of enlightenment is this which, far from founding meaning, is in fact said to confound the people? What is this enlightenment which cruelly replaces “the clear, unreal, idyllic light of the beginning,” the transparent world of the standpoint of immediacy, with “a semi-darkness that bewilders the senses”? Why does this corrosive “social consciousness” have as its principal object the inequities of the market? Why is its critical language so suggestive of that central concern with distribution and distributive justice savagely pilloried by Marx in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*? Why are this unhappy consciousness, the divisions and inequities it uncovers, and the demands it makes named *social* phenomena rather than more unambiguously *class* phenomena? Indeed, does Fanon not proceed to warn prophetically that this upsurge of “social consciousness” and “the fierce demand for social justice” it contains would find voice not in the language of class, but “paradoxically” in the language of “primitive tribalism”—if this *social* consciousness is attained “before the *national* phase,” that is to say, before the maturation of “national consciousness” (DT, 138; WE, 204, my emphasis: RT)? And is it not this dangerous prospect of the *uneven development of social consciousness and national consciousness* which leads the text, after initially insisting on an invidious distinction between the social and the national (as though the one belonged to liberating discourse while

the other spelled mystification), to conclude with a vision of a new political practice that is at once “*national, revolutionary, and social*”? Is this not why the pivotal text of class analysis in Fanon’s *oeuvre*, “*Mésaventures de la conscience nationale*” (“Misadventures of National Consciousness”), ends with a call for the interweaving of “political and social consciousness” into the fabric of a new “humanism” (DT, 138; WE, 204)? After the breakdown of social order in Somalia and Rwanda, after three decades of independence, and as South Africa faces the challenge of majority rule with the menacing figure of Buthelezi on the horizon, we can hardly gainsay the urgency of these questions. What are the necessary and enabling conditions for this interweaving of the national, the revolutionary, and the social in the context of a refashioned humanism? What are the necessary and enabling conditions for the formation of a new *partisan universal* without which the discredited discourse of race would be succeeded by the baffled and atavistic irrationalism of a violent ethnicity?

In a celebrated text, Antonio Gramsci called Machiavelli a “precocious Jacobin.”¹⁷ Briefly put, Gramsci read Machiavelli as the visionary proponent of a radical oxymoron in political discourse, the oxymoron of the *partisan universal*. For Gramsci, Machiavelli understood, two and a half centuries before the Jacobins gave it a “categorical embodiment,” the necessity of a national revolution founded upon the political integration of the oppressed classes of town and country. Envisioned by Machiavelli and given its archetypal historical form by the Jacobins, the “national-popular” is that political formation which achieves the common good even as it attends to particular interests. It is, of course, the name for Gramsci’s own idea of the vocation of the “modern prince” as architect of a specifically Italian revolution that would be popular and national. A great deal of Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* is dedicated to showing the historical and theoretical conditions of possibility of this project of the national-popular revolution.

So strikingly similar are Gramsci’s and Fanon’s idioms and programs—to say nothing of their supportive concepts—that I am tempted to call Gramsci a precocious Fanonist. A Fanonist reading of Gramsci would indeed locate the historical conditions of possibility of the “popular-national” as project of the modern prince in his portrait of the arrested development of the Italian bourgeoisie, the poverty of what he calls (again prefiguring Fanon) its “national consciousness,” its twin cultural vices of cosmopolitanism and nar-

cissism, its historical inability to summon the oppressed of the countryside onto the stage of national regeneration. Disqualified by these class incapacities, the Italian bourgeoisie must forfeit its archetypal historical vocation to the modern prince, the Communist party.¹⁸ The theoretical supports of this political vision are to be found in Gramsci's Aesopian and symptomatic renaming of Marxism as a philosophy of praxis, his accentuation of what the first thesis on Feuerbach called the "active side," in a word his activistic materialism; but also in that Left-Burkean refusal of mathematical rationalism in sociopolitical discourse, that critique of scholastic "Byzantinism" which made him privilege local reality over global abstraction.¹⁹ Activistic materialism and national experience: these were the materials of Gramsci's vision.

Without a doubt, the conceptual supports of Fanon's vision of the national, the social and the revolutionary as cognate terms of a new political practice, have an elective affinity with Gramsci's philosophy of praxis and its political implications. Fanon, too, refuses to incarcerate our understanding of class relations, class capacities, and revolutionary agency in what he disparagingly calls "*un raisonnement*," deductive reasoning (DT, 116; WE, 175). More precisely, his resuscitation of the native drama of the social world would not trade the constricted standpoint of immediate knowledge for an "objective dialectic" pledged to allegorical denotations of social practices and processes in what are, after all, singular circumstances.

It is this Gramscian refusal of "scholastic abstraction" which would prevent the discourse of the social from delivering on its promise of divulging seamless truths, and of bestowing unambiguous proper names upon its objects and targets. True, what the discourse of the social has accomplished is decisive—a demystification of the nationalist rhetoric of an undifferentiated people: "This new reality which the colonized will now come to know exists only in action. It is the struggle which by exploding the old colonial reality reveals unknown facets, brings out new meanings and pinpoints contradictions *camouflaged by that [colonial] reality*" (DT, 94; WE, 147, my emphasis: RT). And yet this new reality, these new meanings, are not discrete events but social and semantic formations structurally related to "the old colonial reality," to colonial history. If that history is no longer apprehended as absolute alienation to be undone by an equally "absolute praxis," if it is now refigured as occasioning internal transformations coadunate with the particular interests of

determinate social spaces and agents, the fact remains that the peculiar coerciveness of this colonial history has pathogenic effects on all the relations and agencies it spawns. All social and cultural contradictions within the body of the nascent society, all divisions and differences whose manifestation gives the lie to the nationalist myth of unanimity, are nevertheless kindred products of that coercive history. All proper names distinguishing social subjects and cultural spaces from one another are correlative metaphors for the characteristics of social being and consciousness fashioned under colonial and neocolonial auspices. This means that the antithetical terms named by the discourse of the social—town and country, bourgeoisie and proletariat, proletariat and peasantry, proletariat and lumpen-proletariat—these putative antitheses are caught in a circle of genetic and reciprocal malformation. Thanks to their shared ancestry in the colonial system of material and cultural production, there can be no social agent or cultural space in serene possession of an inviolate identity. So it is that rural radicalism, which provided the initial access to internal contradictions masked by colonial reality (and nationalist discourse), is in another context seen to be perversely defined by that very reality. The universal rivalry of town and country here assumes an idiosyncratic form: “We are not dealing here with the classic antagonism between town and country. What we have here is the antagonism between the colonized who is excluded from the advantages of colonialism and the one who manages to turn colonial exploitation to account” (DT, 67; WE, 112: RT). Placed in the historical colonial dialectic of uneven development and underdevelopment, the putative dualism of the corrupt city versus the virtuous country that has “preserved its individuality free from colonial impositions” is called into question.

Can other incarnations of internal contradictions revealed by the corrosive discourse of the social escape this debunking account of their cognate properties? Can any social subject in this peculiar universe of contradictions be singled out for unqualified condemnation by what Fanon later calls “the judgment of history” as universal history (DT, 116; WE, 175)? Can any social subject be unreservedly assigned that progressive vocation and revolutionary paramountcy demanded by classical Marxist iconography? And finally, can the suspecting hermeneutics of the *national* as idolatry obstructing “rational knowledge” of social truths survive the depth analysis of all social agents and relations? That the terms of social relations of

exploitation, as we will presently see, lack coherent shape founded upon *indigenous relations of production*; that thanks to this fact, "the fierce demand for social justice" would assume the form of discontent with *the politics of distribution*; that the geography of this discontent is indeterminate and may well be defined by ethnicity; and that an integral emancipatory politics must in consequence be at once "national, revolutionary, and social"—all these are consequences of the aporias generated by the discourse of the social.

It can be argued that Fanon's text subsequently proposes a classical dialectical resolution of these aporias; that it has a name—*national culture*—for what the cognation of the national, the social, and the revolutionary can achieve as matrix of a postcolonial mode of material and symbolic production; and that the construction of this order of meaning is envisioned as the hybrid offspring of historical necessity and collective will. Such a classical Hegelian reading is indeed tempting. It would see in the ambiguous consequences of the upsurge of "social consciousness" an ultimately happy outcome. The simple identity of the standpoint of immediacy would have undergone the purgatorial education of inner division, the inescapable sin of particularization in the shape of social "treason." There emerges a richer, infinitely more complex experience or rather *project* of identity: the project of a "second harmony," which is no longer the gift or curse of nature (nature as race and the racial community) but is, rather, an achievement.²⁰ Precisely such a *concrete universal* is national culture. National culture would be the product of that critical "national consciousness" which "rationalizes" or "elicits reason" from "popular action" (DT, 95; WE, 149; RT). National culture would be the embodiment of practical reason in a determinate political space.

And in this program of rationalization, what would become of the family of decisionist categories initially sanctioned by the antidialectics of domination and revolt? What would become of invocations of the will, conation, "the ought," quintessential idioms of a politics which the authors of *The German Ideology* would have accredited to "the fantasy and impotence of pious desire"?²¹ First encountered in all their impetuous indeterminacy, and evidently discredited by the language of constraining relations and processes generated by the discourse of the social, these decisionist idioms would reemerge as the grammar of action consonant with the specific situation of particular agents in the world capitalist system. They would signify,

on this reading, the imperative liberty of social agents forced to be free from the determinism of objective conditions by the peculiarities of their social formation. The historical necessity of freedom! Is it not this meta-ethical oxymoron detested by the “existentialist” author of *Black Skin, White Masks*—“The dialectic that brings necessity into the foundation of my freedom drives me out of myself” (PN, 129; BS, 135)—is it not this position which would ultimately be endorsed by what we may call the constructivist account of historical imperatives adumbrated by the author of *The Wretched of the Earth*? Harnessing subject and structure, refiguring the narrative space of immediacy as a “territory of mediation” (Hegel),²² “the weary road toward rational knowledge” would have followed the generic itinerary of dialectical cognition: “The claim of the dialectic as a distinct mode of thought is to set categories like those of Identity and Difference in motion, so that the inevitable starting point is ultimately transformed beyond recognition.”²³

Such a Hegelian-Marxist reading of the categorial conditions of possibility of national culture is all the more plausible if we consider Fanon’s efforts to hitch the project of transformation to the vital interests of particular social groups. Yet these efforts, orthodox in their inspiration, are notoriously revisionist and inconclusive in their consequences. True, by virtue of this search for determinate revolutionary subjects, we are placed a long way from the anarchistic rhetoric of an insurrection without a social head. But is this spontaneist vision of an *acephalous revolution* replaced by a politics of hegemony that elects its central protagonists from the social relations of production? Who will undertake the political education of social discontent into a national language of emancipation? What is the class origin of the “political educator,” and to what school of social labor does the educator owe his education? These questions are forced upon us by the ambiguous character of the class analysis by means of which Fanon’s text attempts to fulfill the generic requirements of dialectical knowledge.

The paradigm case of this ambiguous class analysis is Fanon’s account of what he calls the “national bourgeoisie” but which he proceeds to show is neither national nor bourgeois—the “class” that, in Fanon’s eyes, is condemned by history to run the market, the office, and the barracks, as opposed to the factory, the bank, the stock exchange, and the world: the “national bourgeoisie” is the class that runs the politics of distribution. The text in which this portrait

appears, the third chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, may be accounted the periphery's parodic version of the epic roll call which the authors of the *Communist Manifesto* recite in their historicist panegyric to the bourgeoisie's achievements. Like the character of its object, however, this parody is unable to maintain the identity of its genre, unable to sustain the joke. It alternates between a sense of farce and a sense of tragedy, fused into an account of the signal congenital flaws which lead the peripheral bourgeoisie to play its tragicomic role on the stage of postcolonial history. But I have called the case of the bourgeoisie paradigmatic because the mixed tropes in which its life is depicted are to be found in the representations of its historical "others," or rather *cognates*. For the shared context of captive development and underdevelopment radically impairs the economic, political, and moral capacities of all social subjects. In the circumstances, the question of revolutionary agency, the question of historical responsibility for the foundation of a new form of production and culture, becomes especially problematic. The project of a refashioned material and cultural life comes to look like a common good for which social forces are politically obligated to contend. A materialist justification for this political vision is to be found precisely in the idiosyncratic class analysis proffered by "Misadventures of National Consciousness." That monument of orthodox revisionism will repay another visit.

BANEFUL INCONSEQUENCE? THE LIFE HISTORY OF THE "NATIONAL BOURGEOISIE"

For the *revolution of a nation* and the *emancipation of a particular class* of civil society to coincide, for *one estate* to be acknowledged as the estate of the whole society, all the defects of society must conversely be concentrated in another class . . . For *one estate* to be *par excellence* the estate of liberation, another estate must conversely be the obvious estate of oppression.

—KARL MARX, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's
Philosophy of Law: Introduction"

At the center of the world capitalist system, historical materialism has officially shared Nietzsche's sardonic claim that the idea of the *common* good is a catachresis. The classical account of political obligation is that a common good is forged in human communities by shared hopes and fears, needs and affections. Historical material-

ism is coeval with the programmatic suspicion that the "common good" is a sublimation of radically partial interests the legitimacy of which is coterminous with the ascendancy of a class. A detective hermeneutics undertakes to trace rival and successive idioms of the common good to competing and distinctive class positions, interests, and subjectivities, thereby divulging the irredeemable partisanship which dons the mask of universality. Not until Antonio Gramsci, who retrieves for radical thought the humanist idea of the "common sense" that founds *communitas*, do we encounter in historical materialism a conception of the veracity of the common good in class discourse.²⁴ With Gramsci, not only may one say without self-contradiction that the partisan bespeaks the universal, but the character of its representation of the universal becomes the index of its adequacy and authenticity as a particular, historically significant class project. A class project is historically efficacious and legitimate to the degree that it is the voice of a common national good. The criterial property, indeed the norm, of authentic action by an ascendant social class, then, is not the devotion to narrow "corporate-economic" interests, whether shamelessly pursued as such or duplicitously disguised as the common good; the norm is precisely the transgression of such "corporate-economic" interests, such "existential requirements" of the ascendant class and the principled fusion of its prospects with a universal national project.²⁵ That is why the collective egotism of the Italian bourgeoisie was for Gramsci the reprehensible exception rather than the acceptable rule, a historical travesty of that Jacobin solicitude for common national ends which is the archetypal calling of every authentic national bourgeoisie. We have noted that Gramsci accounts for the Italian bourgeoisie's forfeiture of its political obligation in terms of its distorted material formation; and that this materialist explanation of the atrophy of "ethico-political" capacities prefigures Fanon's etiology of an aborted bourgeois hegemony. But the social formation which spawned the industries and industrial proletariat of Turin is not homologous to the African and Caribbean prototype in which Fanon discerned the gestation of a neocolonial economy, civil society, and polity. And if for Gramsci the Italian bourgeoisie forfeited its political responsibility, the mantle of representation would fall upon the shoulders of an heir apparent, the party of industrial workers made cognizant of their kinship with the exploited of the countryside. So it is that the social basis for the "ethico-political" mating of the particular and the universal enfee-

bled in the bourgeois era of Italian history regains its vitality by virtue of the successor or surrogate potency of the workers' movement.

It is here, in this reconquered possibility of an objective dialectic which empowers a successor protagonist to effect the fusion of the partisan and the universal, that Gramsci and Fanon part company. "Mésaventures de la conscience nationale"²⁶ evokes, like Gramsci's meditations on Italian history, the historical etiology of the national bourgeoisie's incapacity to distill from the people's discontent and yearnings a common sense, a national language of ends—in a word, its incapacity to fashion a "national consciousness" out of *its* particular ambitions *and* "popular action." The question is whether Fanon is able to extract from the interstices of *his* social formation successor protagonists adequate to this task. Or whether the candidates he is widely supposed to have designated—the peasantry and the lumpenproletariat—are not ultimately shown to carry serious political and moral deformities precisely because of their material condition and the character of their discontent. And whether, by contrast, the very nature of the national bourgeoisie's malformation does not leave something, some vital *meta-economic capacities*, salvageable from at least a fraction of its members: capacities that may be placed at the service of joint social forces contending to bring into being emancipatory forms of production and culture. At the periphery of the world system, historical materialism can least afford that paralyzing agnosticism, born of a class reductionist perspective on moral and political discourse, which has traditionally been so allergic to the idea of the common good. In this geography of suffering, suffering inflicted by the brutally coercive alienation of productive and political power, historical materialism must entertain the possibility of a political obligation to the pursuit of common ends on the part of rival and related social agents upon whom a shared history has visited differing scars. Such a program is adumbrated by Fanon.

It would seem that framing this project of a common good as a socially contested and politically negotiated achievement is an implicit antirealist, constructivist epistemology. Is there not then, we might conclude, an affinity between Fanon's politics and the post-structuralist account of social circumstance and political agency exemplified by the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe? Paradoxically, however, we shall see that Fanon's constructivist understanding of the political project and its social auspices, his refusal to read it as the discrete property of a singular class, is parasitic upon

a canonical—albeit disappointed—expectation of the special roles and prerogatives of class subjects in history, in particular the normative capacities of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is as if Fanon's disavowal of an "objective dialectic" of the social that founds political agency and meaning is not so much a matter of fundamental principle but the consequence of a historical pessimism, the product of a despair that social agents in *his* universe of experience were incapable of discharging their appointed duties. What, after all, are the signal tropes of Fanon's dramaturgy of class formation—underdevelopment, dependency, inauthenticity, caricature, travesty—if not the products of a frustrated essentialism? And are these not precisely the tropes of sociohistorical representation which have fallen into disrepute ever since the Althusserian critique of essentialism and its radical consummation in the poststructuralist destruction of the metaphysics of social identities. Today, the figure of an "inauthentic bourgeoisie" seems discredited as the creature of an illicit archetypal criticism, one that circumvents the existential conduct and performance of concrete agents in time and space, insists that the protean personifications which this social being ineluctably assumes on a world scale must be judged with reference to a paradigmatic form, and is thus led to issue historical analyses that lament the absent ideality, vacuous threnodies of what might have been. Although he does not consciously enlist post-Althusserian social epistemology to his aid, Immanuel Wallerstein has recently parodied this "reification of an existential actor into an essence" that bears no resemblance to known historical particulars.²⁷

There is no doubt that the deconstruction of the bourgeois archetype, whether it is informed by epistemological principle or is simply a matter of empirical demonstration, has had a salutary effect. In particular it has introduced a nuanced complexity into accounts of social formations in the Third World. It has injected a discordant note into the nationalist lament of the undifferentiated captivity of all social subjects in colonial and postcolonial societies and their unrelieved laceration at the hands of external imperialist forces. In so doing, the post-Althusserian account of class formation in the Third World has come to insist that the "peripheral" bourgeoisie, for all its peculiarities, must be viewed neither as a radical idiosyncrasy, something altogether *sui generis*, nor as a perversion of a paradigmatic form, but rather as a *version* (one among many, each no less

authentic than the other) of that agent of accumulation which world capitalism spawns in variant shapes. To the gains in conceptual acuity and empirical enrichment brought by this de-allegorization of the figure of the bourgeoisie must be added its strategic political significance: what we may call the repatriation of the terms of critical discourse; the recognition of local relations of accumulation and exploitation as autonomous objects of political contestation, once the plea of constraining dependency—always the enemy of critical introspection and the ally of repressive unanimism—has lost some of its cogency. All this and more accrues to theory and practice from the liberation of our understanding of class formation out of the prison house of an embalmed essentialist image.

Yet after we have taken all precautions against the treacherous seductions of antihistorical essentialism, after we have taken due cognizance of the protean shapes in which the bourgeoisie has stalked the differing theaters of world capitalism, are we not enabled and entitled to elicit some knowable *qualities* it has evinced despite the concrete variegations in the physiognomy of its *dramatis personae*? It may well be that the historical *reality* upon which the archetype of the bourgeoisie was modeled is conspicuous by its rarity. All the same, we speak of irresponsible fathers measured by a norm of responsible fatherhood which is arguably belied by the statistical paucity of its historical instantiations. In these days of cavalier refusals of the language of essences, it is worth recalling that the protocol utterance of modern existentialism—"existence precedes essence"—signified a repudiation not of essences but the ascription to them of a primordial ontological status. On this view, descriptions (here the manner in which we characterize class formations in colonial and postcolonial societies) may not indeed be held tributary to ontological universals, but neither are they discrete events, sovereign acts of naming isolate particulars. Rather, descriptions are implicates of what I would call *semantic formations*, *achieved essences* elicited from historical existents, optimal properties which critical usage has salvaged and distilled from time. Something like this strategy of naming—one that is distinguishable from both ontological essentialism and a corrosive nominalism—informs Fanon's account of class relations and the aporetic consequences of that account for his search for a hegemonic agent. Under the aegis of such a strategy, Fanon is enabled to offer a description by negation: he is able to tell us what

classes in colonial and postcolonial societies are *not*; as a result, however, he is unable to name the hegemonic agent without ambiguity.

An immediate and indeed enduring consequence of Fanon's strategy of description is that it depreciates or at least calls into question the materiality of the class protagonists and relations it names. It is as if "class" in general is in the colonial and postcolonial contexts a matter of desire, alienated ambition, intentionality. And the paradigm case of class in the periphery, the "national bourgeoisie"—what could it be but "a bourgeoisie *in spirit* only," in contradistinction to the metropolitan archetype, which is a "direct product of precise economic conditions" (DT, 118–119; WE, 178)? It would appear that describing classes in terms of what they lack in material reality generates a sort of phenomenological account of social positions and relations as "operations of subjects."²⁸ In this sense Fanon's description of class would always retain the legacy of his initial account of social relations in the colonial world as *reaction formations*: symbolic escapes from the confining space, the "fixed position" of the colonized. Class on this view is a collective embodiment of the alienated self's aspiration after a "new way of being" (PN, 39; BS, 25), the social personification of a compulsory impersonation: class as a social form of the "white mask." True, by virtue of its insistence on the alienated and compulsive character of this will to class power, Fanon's phenomenological language avoids that idolatry of the autonomous subject which in the existentialist version of social being construes "class relationship and affiliation as the free invention of a role projected toward the future, rather than determined by the past."²⁹ Nevertheless, at its most materialist, Fanon's account of social being would always resonate with the suggestion that "class" describes not so much a structural mediation of relations of production as an intentional mediation of relations of domination and subordination; not so much an objective determination as a mode of subjectivity, more or less inauthentic, heteronomous, and above all lacking in the cognitive and moral capacities required to forge universalist ends out of particular interests.

And it is as representatives of forms of subjectivity, *forms of dependent consciousness*—rather than as mutually constituted agents of social relations of production—that bourgeoisie and proletariat first make their appearance in Fanon's dramaturgy of class. The bourgeoisie as a class of "affranchised slaves," the proletariat as "the

'bourgeois' fraction of the colonized people": far from being caught in an irreconcilable antagonism endemic to native relations of production, the famous protagonists are here sibling progenies of alien rule and invasive historical processes, intent on negotiating rights of entrance into the colonizer's domain of being; collusive doubles in a social existential drama whose plot is the imitation and reproduction of the conquerors' scheme of hierarchy. But of the two representatives of dependent and complicit subjectivity, it is the national bourgeoisie that receives the harsher treatment. So unsparing is Fanon's outrage, so withering his scorn, that he seems altogether unwilling to entertain the plea of external constraint and coercion as the principal explanation for the national bourgeoisie's incapacities: "The traditional weakness, which is almost congenital to the national consciousness of underdeveloped countries, is not solely the result of the mutilation of the colonized people by the colonial regime. It is also the result of the laziness of the national bourgeoisie, of its intellectual penury, and of the profoundly cosmopolitan formation of its spirit" (DT, 96; WE, 149; RT). No beneficiaries of the dispassionate scientificity which is the official posture of materialist analysis and its latent progressivist optimism, bourgeoisie and proletariat are, in this mode of representation, objects of a sardonic calumny. Jack Woddis and others have seen in this manner of apprehending bourgeoisie and proletariat, in the seemingly unqualified nature of its revulsion, evidence of Fanon's fundamental distaste for socialist thought, technological development, modernity—and their indispensable protagonists.³⁰ This is almost certainly a hasty verdict, the result of inadequate attention to the rival and complementary critical strategies which frame Fanon's account of the classes.

For no sooner does Fanon assume the guise of the political moralist perversely heedless of the conditions which constrain the activities and the bearing of classes in concrete circumstances; no sooner does he pronounce unqualified condemnations of the proletariat's and the bourgeoisie's collective egoism, indolence, incompetence, than he proceeds to trace these moral and intellectual incapacities to the socioeconomic formation which spawned them. No longer reducible to bizarre moral and psychological failures, the deformities which Fanon discerns in proletariat and bourgeoisie begin to look as if they share the etiology and characteristics of the social pathology that Gramsci called the "corporate-economic" form of class consciousness and project. The "corporate-economic" orientation, the poverty of

spirit that defines it, indeed the salience of “spirit” or rather the substitution of “spirit”—albeit one of picayune efficacy—for material force as credential and criterial property of class: these deformations and displacements are shown to be the outcome of social malformations. In so doing, the text adumbrates a materialist explanation of the privileged place that, for better or for worse, it assigns to “spirit” in its own interpretive vocabulary; it adumbrates, in other words, *a materialist explanation of its own idealism*. It may indeed not be too much to claim that Fanon’s text—I speak in particular of “*Mésaventures de la conscience nationale*”—is a rare instance of reflexive testimony to the occasion and generation of the idealist idiom in critical discourse. Unlike external accounts of the social formation of the idealist vision to be found in the Marxist classics,³¹ Fanon’s text offers an internal demonstration that neither the “idealism” of class (this bourgeoisie which delusively imagines itself into being, this “bourgeoisie in spirit only”) nor the idealism of his own critical language (one that would insistently invoke what *ought* to be done in the teeth of historical constraints) is entirely whimsical, illicit, an ideological figure of speech obscuring reality and a language consonant with it. A materialist account of *the idealist experience as social reality*, the social reality of underdeveloped materiality; an idealist language that attests to its material formation, its *raison d’être*, even its legitimacy: such is the complex critical strategy which would vie for hegemony with the philippic of the political moralist too impatient with the national bourgeoisie’s outrageous foibles and perfidies to inquire into their extenuating circumstances, or to envision what ironic possibilities may be salvaged from these very infirmities.

The result of this internal shift in narrative and critical strategy is that the “willful narcissism” (“corporate-economic” orientation in Gramsci’s language) of our twin putative protagonists, bourgeoisie and proletariat, is now accredited to the peculiar formal and substantive properties of their formation. Peculiar, of course, in relation to semiotic possibilities distilled from historical exemplars, and—let it be said—from Marxist iconography. By the *formal* properties of class formation I mean the kind of relational logic which describes the presence of classes in economy and civil society. Fanon did not explicitly sketch this formal genealogy of class relations; he concentrated instead on a substantive differentiation of the positions, interests, competencies, and modes of consciousness of the colonized bourgeoisie and proletariat on the one hand, from those of the

metropolitan bourgeoisie and proletariat on the other. But implicit in Fanon's substantive descriptions of the specific deformities and incapacities of particular classes, especially those of the national bourgeoisie, is a formal conception of the heterogenesis of class relations in colonial and postcolonial societies as such. And that conception is in turn influenced by a certain reading of the classical Marxist account of the genealogy of class relations.

According to that reading, classes in general, and bourgeoisie and proletariat in particular, are social agents reciprocally constituted by virtue of relations of production whose generative principle is ultimately indigenous. That classes are caught in an antagonistic collision does not obscure the fact that they are implicates of an organic development and an equally organic relationship: an organic development because class formation answers to inner necessities and contingencies of the social life process; an organic relationship because classes are mutually generated, brought into being by reciprocal causation. To put it another way, classes are kin native speakers of an indigenous language of production, albeit native speakers disposing of differing, indeed vastly unequal communicative positions, powers, competencies. It is because—and to the degree that—the class relation answers to indigenous necessities and contingencies that it harbors within it a prodigious fecundity for the self-renewal of the social life process. Let us call this version of the genealogy of class relations *nativist*.

Against this relational logic of class formation as inner diremption and reciprocal causation, Fanon measures the genealogy of class relations in the colonial world and finds it fatefully eccentric. Like the *perverse dialectic* which governed the primary relationship of the colonizer and the colonized, the derivative process of class formation among the colonized is robbed of a logic of inner necessitation of its structure and reciprocal generation of its agents. In place of the organic character of class relations and class antagonism in the nativist paradigm, we have here a relationship of contingent *mechanical antagonism*—the obverse side of the *mechanical solidarity*³² to which the race structure of power condemns all the colonized. This class structure is an artificial system of social differentiation no more organically connected to endogenous productive relations than the reduction of the colonized to an undifferentiated whole in relation to the position of the colonizer. It is not a case here of one social group's owing its position and collective attributes to its material

intercourse with another social group which itself derives its position and attributes from internal relations of production. The classes of this dependent social world represent gradations of functionality, privilege, and immiseration within an externally determined socio-economic reality; however significant, the differences among them are the consequence of their common subjection to an exogenous mode of production, an epiphenomenon of the violent rupture of social reality from its natural history both in its generically human forms and in its local particulars.

It is in this peculiar system of enforced socioeconomic roles fashioned by an externally imposed capitalist mode of production, that Fanon places the positions, functions, and attributes of the colonized proletariat and bourgeoisie. Just as bourgeoisie and proletariat are the "pure classes" of an autonomous capitalist society, paradigms of capitalistic social formations, so colonized bourgeoisie and proletariat in Fanon's schema are prototypical siblings of an invasive historical process; they owe their conditions of existence neither to each other nor to an internal logic of development of the mode of production. An external agency at once engenders and differentiates their modes of being in the service of its imperial project: "Now, in the colonies the economic conditions are conditions of a foreign bourgeoisie" (DT, 118; WE, 178). And once the triadic principle of internal origin, reciprocal determination, and mutual gestation is missing, bourgeoisie and proletariat are condemned to congenital deformation and a life cycle of underdevelopment. To this perverse genealogy and relational logic is owed the atrophy of conditions necessary for the productive antagonism and interanimation of the two classes. So it is that the national bourgeoisie, according to Fanon, lacks the generic capacity of a truly native bourgeoisie to "create the conditions for the development of an important proletariat" (DT, 116; WE, 175; RT), or to "bring about the existence of coherent social relations founded on the principle of its domination as a class" (DT, 108, WE, 164: RT).³³ As we shall presently see, the substantive deformities of bourgeoisie and proletariat which Fanon's text would proceed to enumerate and bemoan are structural effects and symptomatic consequences of the displaced genealogy and eccentric kinship of the pair.

Against this historical pessimism in the matter of class capacities and the nativist desire which generates that pessimism, it is possible today to present a different perspective on the prospects of class formation and class capacities in postcolonial societies. In addition

to the empirical wisdom of hindsight, such a perspective may well be framed by a less insistently nativist (not to say nationalist) idea of the genealogy of class relations and agents, a less unitarian, nuclear family archetype of their kinship, and consequently a less rigidly determinist vision of the prospects bequeathed to them by their allegedly inauspicious origins. Could it be that the nativist norm of class relations circumvents the complex instance of a social formation such as that of South Africa, in which the development of an important "native" African bourgeoisie may well be stifled, but in which "the development of an important proletariat," a most important proletariat, antagonistically related to the capitalist class of a conquering race, is all the more inescapably precipitated? That a consequence of the nativist norm of the bourgeoisie-proletariat relation is to discount the circumstance of the African proletariat under apartheid capitalism is ironic, when we recall that apartheid is for Fanon the paradigm case of the logic of the colonial antagonism. Or perhaps this circumvention is *not* ironic; perhaps it is precisely Fanon's insight into the exemplary coerciveness of apartheid that blinds him to nuances and differentials in class capacity and agency which *this* social formation of necessity elicits from its putative native proletariat and native bourgeoisie. Could it be that this is the outcome of a nativist fallacy: that it construes the Marxist thesis of the mutual gestation of bourgeoisie and proletariat as a requirement that the pair should not only be coeval, but also cognate and even consanguineous?

And what would adherents of world-system theory say regarding this entire rhetoric of the bastard bourgeoisie and the norm of the authentic, because autochthonous, bourgeoisie upon which that rhetoric is parasitic? Would Fanon's voice not sound to these historical realists as a quaint and discredited nostalgia for modes of historical agency and social action made magically safe from the polymorphous perversity of a single, inescapably transnational capitalism?³⁴

Moreover, it may be argued on empirical grounds that the Fanonist perspective on the prospects of capitalist development and class formation in postcolonial societies is much too rigidly deterministic—remorselessly stagnationist or, worse still, pejorist. It is as if the alleged fact of exogenous determination spells, like original sin, not only a congenital deformity in the physiognomy of the two classes, but also an incurable reproduction of the properties of underdevel-

opment. From this perspective, the processes and projects of indigenization evident in a number of postcolonial nations represent not at all the patriation or repatriation of the logic of class formation in the service of an endogenous capitalism, but the inconsequential, albeit costly, piracy of essentially neocolonial economies by an unproductive and prodigal elite. An account of class formation initially informed by a sense of historical specificity would seem here to have abdicated precisely that discriminating consciousness of historical particulars; so enchained is its purview to an inaugural diagnosis.³⁵

Beyond the matter of empirical and historical validity, a fundamental and critical suspicion of a political nature may be voiced. To what extent does this insistence on the indigenous genealogy of class relations as a certificate of their authenticity and historical fecundity—to what extent does this entire nativist norm harbor a will to contain the story of class struggle within the charmed circle of national purpose? A nativist rhetoric of class would then do duty as the materialist armor of an integral nationalism whose mission it is to honor and return all disputatious voices to hearth and home, there to discipline and educate them into a votive recognition of an essential kinship. And after the national bourgeoisie has learned that there is no conceivable exit from the gilded servitude to which a natal fate has condemned it, may it not with materialist justice be invited to take its dutiful place in a national council intent on autarchic development? What began as a plaintive account of class as a comprador formation ends up as a prototypical call for the “historic compromise.”

Or does it? It may well be that the nativist premises and inferences which I am ascribing to Fanon have as their latent intention and outcome not the circumvention of class struggle or its dissolution in the consensual politics of national ambition, but rather the desire to discern in class relations that local idiom which alone can give them visceral tension, significance, meaning. We need only recall Gramsci's life-long solicitude for the “peculiar national characteristics” of the politics of class, for “putting class struggle back at the center of the nation's life,”³⁶ to dispel the fear that the nativist orientation in the discourse of class ultimately entails a “retreat from class” altogether.³⁷ Rather, with Gramsci the nativist orientation implants the politics of class in the vortex of national consciousness by contesting the claim of “the ruling class to be the sole representative of the nation.”³⁸ Ultimately Gramsci's revolutionary nativism would deny this repre-

sentative role to the Italian bourgeoisie and invest it in the party of workers and peasants. We have noted that Fanon parts company with Gramsci in this matter of a successor and surrogate representative of the common national good. Framed by the colonial context and its aftermath, Fanon's nativist class analysis is compelled to question the capacities of both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat for embodying the partisan universal.

But, it may be asked, from the moment that it is wrenched so completely free of the interests and projects of either class, is the prospect of a partisan universal not thereby divested of any knowable conditions of its possibility, left directionless in the abyss of indeterminacy? We seem caught in the dilemma of a politics of class afraid to call itself by its name, unable or unwilling to designate without equivocation the offended and the offender. A different conclusion, however, is possible. It is that this politics of class is indeed capable of naming the offended and the offender, but that, unlike historical materialism's *official* letters of indictment, it fashions *its* indictment from a report on the affairs of the *market* rather than the scene of *production*. It is not for nothing that it is Third-World revolutionary discourse that has restored to centrality this "report of an injustice," the Rousseauistic condemnation of "all the monstrous injustice in the system of 'yours' and 'mine.'"³⁹ For this distributionist idiom in the language of class, this discursive preeminence of civil society's market relations, practices, and institutions, is mandated by the offending hypertrophy of relations of inequality which the conditions of underdevelopment paradoxically make manifest. An incipient critique of relations of production is of necessity voiced in the visceral accents of a critique of distributive injustice, the repressive politics which sustains it, and the existential attributes of its class enforcers and beneficiaries.⁴⁰

The outcome of a nativist norm of class formation cheated of its expectations is thus a transcription of the narrative of social relations of production into an accusing account of comprador privilege and its victims, an account of radical and conspicuous differentials in the sphere of distribution. It is under the aegis of this distributionist turn in the language of class that Fanon renames the African proletariat the "bourgeois" fraction of the colonized people," and in so doing comes blasphemously close to asserting the identity of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the "colonial context." It is as if, having denied the peripheral bourgeoisie and proletariat an organic albeit

antagonistic kinship as agents of production, as buyers and sellers of labor power, Fanon would *a fortiori* discern in them a metaphoric identity as agents of relations of distribution, kindred though unequal beneficiaries of comprador privilege. That is why Fanon places the social positions and political projects of the colonized bourgeoisie and proletariat under the common rubric of privileged servitude and reformism: their positions and politics are a function not of their relationship to an internal mode of production, but of the rewarding services they render to the extraverted economy and its cultural, administrative, and political superstructures. Thus, at the beginning of his analysis of the class composition of the national liberation movement, Fanon virtually groups together various strata of the urban sector which embody this mediatory role and are therefore exemplars of the condition of privileged servitude and meliorist politics: "intellectual or commercial elites"; "the workers, primary-school teachers, artisans and small shopkeepers who have begun to profit—at a discount, to be sure—from the colonial situation." Fanon's description of the intellectual elite as "a kind of class of slaves who are individually free, of affranchised slaves" follows immediately after his generalized identification of those social categories that are brought into a "privileged" position by the requirements of the political economy of colonialism (DT, 24–25; WE, 60).

Of the proletariat specifically, Fanon writes that it is:

the nucleus of the colonized people which has been most pampered by the colonial regime. The embryonic proletariat of the towns is in a comparatively privileged position. In the capitalist countries, the proletariat has nothing to lose; it is they who eventually have everything to gain. In the colonized countries the proletariat has everything to lose. In reality it represents that fraction of the colonized people which is necessary and irreplaceable for the proper functioning of the colonial machine: it includes tram conductors, taxi drivers, miners, dockers, interpreters, nurses, and so on. It is these elements which constitute the most faithful followers of the nationalist parties, and who because of the privileged place they hold in the colonial system constitute the "bourgeois" fraction of the colonized people. (DT, 64; WE, 108)

Fanon is exercised less by the secret history of the African proletariat—the superexploitation of its labor power by an invasive capital—than by its manifest status within the local structures of

distribution, exchange, and consumption. What matters to him is that with this very subservience to alien capital the proletariat is able to purchase a comparatively privileged standard of living. Fanon thinks he detects in the proletariat a dual personality: slave to an exogenous regime of production, it struts about the local marketplace like a lumpen colossus. The result of this existential ambiguity of the proletariat is that it generates not revolutionary consciousness but rather status consciousness, particularism, and reformism. Fanon thereby suggests that a proletariat's consciousness is potentially revolutionary only when the relations of production, exchange, and consumption in which it is inscribed reproduce and reinforce one another according to a relentless logic of exploitation. The "harsh school of labor," as Marx called it, forges a revolutionary will only if the extracurricular areas of the workers' world are but remorseless repetitions of its rigors. In the absence of this circle of repetitions a proletariat, on this reading, lacks that sense of the oppressive interconnectedness of spheres of existence which nurtures, in the language of Lukács, the standpoint of the totality. Unlike its canonical metropolitan prototype which is allegedly blessed with a totalizing vision, the proletariat of the colonial and neocolonial societies is what Lukácsian Marxism says of the bourgeoisie: it is "particularism *par excellence*."⁴¹ Fanon's proletariat is particularist in a double sense: first, in the necessary abstraction of its position in the structure of distribution from its position in the structure of production; second, in the consequent abstraction of its class interests from a common national good, in a word, its corporate-economic orientation. By virtue of this double practice of abstraction the proletariat, so to speak, imitates the action of its "Other," its bastard sibling—the national bourgeoisie. The pathological individualism which Fanon detects in the national bourgeoisie he finds equally present in the proletariat: "In the colonies it is at the very core of the embryonic working class that you find individualist behaviour." We have here proletarians who "follow in the steps of their bourgeoisie" (DT, 66, 101; WE, 111, 156). Such is the larger significance of the metaphoric relation which Fanon would seem to discern in naming *his* proletariat "the 'bourgeois' fraction of the colonized people."

Thus, it was precisely his reading of the classical Marxist account of the formation of the proletariat, the structural unity of its experience, and the resultant wealth of its capacities that led Fanon to offer a negative portrait of the colonized proletariat. It is indeed a

sketchy—and contestable—portrait, nothing as extensive as the depiction of the national bourgeoisie. But the substance of that characterization, no less than its brevity, is ironically a consequence of Fanon's adherence to Marxist convention. For how can dramatic detail, to say nothing of epic significance, be accorded to a proletariat which is not antagonistically integrated with a native bourgeoisie into a national system of material production? The canonical tradition may not insist on the consanguinity of the two protagonists, but it narrates their mutual gestation and interactive development. Thus Marx and Engels: "In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed."⁴² Again: "The development of the industrial proletariat is, in general, conditioned by the development of the industrial bourgeoisie. Only under its rule the proletariat wins extensive national existence, which can raise its revolution to a national one and itself creates the modern means of production, which become just so many means of its revolutionary emancipation."⁴³ By the same token, the malformation and historical inauthenticity of the colonized proletariat is a function of the historical incapacity of the colonized bourgeoisie to "bring about the existence of coherent social relations founded on the principle of its domination as a class." So it is that when he considers this pathology of class formation and class relations, Fanon devotes scant attention to the colonized proletariat and singles out the colonized bourgeoisie for special examination and execration; for the secret of the proletariat is the bourgeoisie.

It is in the depiction of the national bourgeoisie that the nativist premises of Fanon's class analysis become most evident. Such is the latent orthodoxy of Fanon's revisionism that, having given short shrift to the putative claim of the colonized proletariat to be the revolutionary agent, he needs to justify his cognate disqualification of the national bourgeoisie to be the authentic voice of a common national good. Fanon needs to explain his fear that if this class succeeded in capturing the leadership of the national liberation movement, as indeed it would in most cases, it would prove itself quite incapable of implementing an authentic bourgeois revolution, one which in forging the foundations of an autonomous capitalist economy is solicitous of the popular needs of the nascent nation. Such a bourgeois revolution would require that the national bourgeoisie

nurture a *national consciousness* of shared ends out of its particular predicament and interests. Under the auspices of a class project, the bourgeoisie would thus give coherent form to the people's inchoate democratic and national aspirations: "This fight for democracy against human oppression will progressively leave the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge, sometimes laboriously, as a claim to nationhood" (DT, 95; WE, 148: RT). This, according to the normative Gramscianism of Fanon's historical imagination, would be the special calling of the national bourgeoisie. Alas, the "elites" are incapable of performing this role in the course of the national liberation struggle, let alone of directing a postcolonial program of autonomous development:

It so happens that the unpreparedness of the elites, the absence of organic links between them and the masses, their laziness, and, let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle will give rise to tragic mishaps. National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been. The faults that we find in it are quite sufficient explanation of the facility with which, in the young independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. These are the cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression, that is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity. We shall see that such retrograde steps with all the weaknesses and serious dangers that they entail are the historical result of the incapacity of the national bourgeoisie in underdeveloped countries to rationalise popular action, that is to say their incapacity to see into the reasons for that action. (DT, 95; WE, 148-149: RT)

Still, this account of the inability of the "elites" to direct a national democratic project is not so much explanatory as it is descriptive. Or rather we would say that, as in other passages addressing the same issue, the language of causation is blurred by the rival force of critical description and even condemnation. Yet we must extract the causal account from the critical description if we are to follow Fanon's understanding of the national bourgeoisie's predicaments and actions as amounting to "tragic mishaps," the lamentable *dénoue-*

ment of a historical possibility, rather than the laughable results of a misconceived and reprehensible project. That is why Constance Farrington's rendition of Fanon's "*Mésaventures de la conscience nationale*" as "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" misconstrues Fanon's meaning. Far from intending to signal the inexorable flaws or endemic snares of an undertaking, as Farrington's translation suggests, Fanon wants to explain how it is that an enterprise of great historical moment and undeniable legitimacy went awry. For national consciousness and the "national phase" of historical existence together embody a mode and moment of human experience which ought not to be skipped or which is allegedly obsolete—that is Fanon's answer to abstract internationalists, "certain pharisees" of the Left, to say nothing of today's votaries of a triumphant transnationalism (DT, 174; WE, 246–247). On the contrary, for a human collectivity reduced to the "mechanical solidarity" of race, it is especially imperative to recover the experience of particularity through the creation of distinctive material and symbolic cultures. It is thus a profound appreciation of the situational and even ontological significance of national consciousness that would lead Fanon to decry and to explain its perversion at the hands of the colonial and postcolonial bourgeoisies.

This, then, is the peculiar historical materialism—one informed by a politically charged understanding of universality and particularity—which Fanon proceeds to deploy. He wants to account for the inability of the bourgeoisie of the colony to engender an adequate form of national consciousness—a national consciousness capable of nurturing autonomous economic, political, and cultural institutions, of supporting a project of collective individuation within the commonwealth of human universals. He attempts to explain why it is that this class would substitute for this mission the catastrophes of a recrudescing racial consciousness, vacuous nationalism, and lethal tribalism, passing from one to the other as its narrow interests and insecurities would demand. And finally, Fanon would sketch an explanatory and indeed prophetic account of the political, social, and moral consequences of the ascendancy of this class: the authoritarian rule and state violence, shameless kleptocracy and nameless misery, the devastation and hopelessness it will leave in its wake.

This etiology of class misrule and postcolonial disorder follows hard on the heels of the very paragraph in which Fanon excoriates the "elites" for their indolence and poverty of spirit:

The national bourgeoisie which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped bourgeoisie. Its economic power is almost nil, and in any case incommensurate with that of the metropolitan bourgeoisie which it hopes to replace. In its willful narcissism, the national bourgeoisie is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the metropolitan bourgeoisie. But that same independence which literally drives it into a corner will give rise within its ranks to catastrophic reactions, and will oblige it to send out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country. The university and merchant classes which make up the most enlightened section of the new state are in fact characterised by the smallness of their number and their being concentrated in the capital, and the type of activities in which they are engaged: business, agriculture and the liberal professions. Neither financiers nor industrial magnates are to be found within this national bourgeoisie. The national bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor work; it is completely canalised into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and to be part of the racket. The psychology of the national bourgeoisie is that of the businessman, not that of a captain of industry; and it is only too true that the greed of the colonizers and the system of embargoes set up by colonialism has hardly left them any other choice. Under the colonial system, a bourgeoisie which accumulates capital is an impossible phenomenon. (DT, 96; WE, 149: RT)

Here the text corrects or rather supplements the language of moral revulsion with a causal account of class incapacities: "The absence of any analysis of the total population induces onlookers to think that there exists a powerful and perfectly organized bourgeoisie. In fact, we know today that the bourgeoisie in underdeveloped countries is nonexistent. What creates a bourgeoisie is not the bourgeois spirit, nor its taste or manners, nor even its aspirations. The bourgeoisie is above all the direct product of precise economic conditions" (DT, 118; WE, 178). And it is precisely the atrophy of its role in material production which, Fanon suggests, engenders the hypertrophy of the colonized bourgeoisie's status consciousness and its exhibitionist imitation of the thought patterns and behavior of the metropolitan bourgeoisie: "The bourgeoisie which has adopted unreservedly and with enthusiasm the ways of thinking characteristic

of the metropole, which has become amazingly alienated from its own thought and has based its consciousness on foundations which are typically foreign, will realize, with its mouth watering, that it lacks something which makes a bourgeoisie: money. The bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries is a bourgeoisie in spirit only. It is not its economic strength, nor the dynamism of its leaders, nor the breadth of its ideas that ensures its peculiar quality of bourgeoisie. Consequently it is from its origins and for a long time afterwards a bourgeoisie of the civil service" (DT, 118-119; WE, 178-179).

"A bourgeoisie of the civil service." This designation is only one among many employed by Fanon. The indeterminate nature of the relation of this social group to productive activity, hence the questionable character of its qualification to be called a "class," let alone a "bourgeoisie" in the Marxian sense, is reflected in Fanon's shifting nomenclature. He refers to members of this "class" interchangeably as follows: the "elites," "intellectual and commercial elites," "colonized intellectuals," "a kind of class of enfranchised slaves, or slaves who are individually free," "a national bourgeoisie of traders," "the merchant bourgeoisie," a "caste."⁴⁴ One thing that it is not and cannot be is a class of industrial capitalists capable of bringing about, as Lenin said of the generic historical role of the bourgeoisie, "the complete victory of commodity production" under national control.⁴⁵ The colonized bourgeoisie is thus capable of "scandalous enrichment" through its dependent collusion with the colonial and neo-colonial power; but it is "incapable of constituting itself as a class [*incapable de se constituer en classe*]" (DT, 110; WE, 167: RT).

A bourgeoisie that is "incapable of constituting itself as a class"! The radical opposition of archetype and caricature in Fanon's materialist analysis is distilled in this phrase. The Marxist classics saw in the bourgeoisie the defining properties of all that the term "class" connotes. According to *The German Ideology*, the very phenomenon of "civil society"—"the social organisation evolving directly out of production and intercourse"—finds its quintessential form in the bourgeois phase of human history: "Civil society as such only develops with the bourgeoisie." But Marx and Engels go further. They claim that "class," the structural matrix of humanity's material intercourse, "is itself a product of the bourgeoisie."⁴⁶ Now, class is a relation of exploitation. But it is also a mode of being and a relation of knowledge as a productive force. "Class" names differentials in the existential capacities and the fund of practical reason available

to members of a determinate society. The Marxist classics assign to the bourgeoisie a paradigmatic status on the grounds that it is the first class in history to embody with unrivaled fecundity this mission of *representative difference*. That representative function inheres, above all, in the bourgeoisie's unprecedented mastery over the forces of production, including knowledge as a productive force.

And it is precisely this material and epistemic mastery which "Misadventures of National Consciousness" finds conspicuously absent in the putative bourgeoisies of the nascent postcolonial world. Of their relation to the economy, the text says that "it has always developed without their having any hand in it. They have nothing more than an approximate, bookish acquaintance with the actual and potential resources of their country's soil and mineral deposits, and therefore they can only speak of these resources on a general and abstract plane" (DT, 97; WE, 151: RT). The result is that the participation of the national bourgeoisie in the national economy is limited to artisanal activities or to functioning as intermediaries of Western capitalism:

The national bourgeoisie discovers its historic mission: that of the intermediary. As we can see, its vocation has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism. The national bourgeoisie will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoisie's business agent, and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner. But this same lucrative role, this cheap-jack's function, this meanness of outlook and this absence of all ambition symbolize the incapability of the national bourgeoisie to fulfil its historic role of bourgeoisie. Here, the dynamic, pioneer aspect, the characteristics of the inventor and of the discoverer of new worlds which are found in all national bourgeoisies are lamentably absent. (DT, 98; WE, 152-153: RT)

Here the text suggests a curious paradox and, one might say, adumbrates a law of the class relation in postcolonial, dependent capitalist societies. If mastery of the productive forces ceases to be the defining, indeed, constitutive attribute of class, control over the appropriation and distribution of the surplus product takes center stage as the marker of class power. It is as if the extent of control of the sphere of distribution and the rate of appropriation and con-

sumption it enables were inversely related to the degree of material power and knowledge at the disposal of the national bourgeoisie. The peculiarity of class power sketched by "Misadventures" is that it combines limitless access to superexploitation of the surplus product with abysmal ignorance of the productive forces. In a language reminiscent of Marx, contemporary Kenyan nomenclature calls the top dogs of the national bourgeoisie "the vampire elite." But in the spirit of Fanon's text, this is a reference not to the ghastly practices of the factory owner intent on sucking all the labor time it can get out of the worker at the point of production; rather, it is a reference to the unrestrained cannibalism of an acquisitive clique bent on thoroughly looting the market and the coffers of the state. Nearly three decades before structural adjustment programs and a new world economic "order" came to free the people for depths of immiseration not even he could have imagined, Fanon was already saying concerning the fatal consequences of this peculiar paradox of class:

The people stagnate deplorably in unbearable misery; slowly they arrive at consciousness of the unutterable treason of their leaders. This consciousness is all the more acute in that the bourgeoisie is incapable of constituting itself as a class. The distribution of wealth that it effects is not spread out between a great many sectors; it is not ranged among different levels, nor does it set up a hierarchy of half-tones. The new caste is an affront all the more disgusting in that the immense majority, nine-tenths of the population, continue to die of starvation. The scandalous enrichment, speedy and pitiless, of this caste is accompanied by a decisive awakening on the part of the people and a growing awareness that promises violent days to come. (DT, 110; WE, 167: RT)

We have here an explanatory and prophetic account of the prominence which distributional struggles and distributionist idioms of radical protest will assume in postcolonial societies. The very atrophy of this lumpenbourgeoisie's role in productive activity lends a heightened importance to factors of inegalitarian distribution and consumption as indices of "class" position. Unproductive acquisitiveness, accumulation for immediate consumption, and status exhibitionism become definitive characteristics of this lumpenbourgeoisie. In the triadic relationship among production, distribution, and consumption, the atrophy of the national bourgeoisie's produc-

tive activity paradoxically occasions a hypertrophy of distributive injustice between the national bourgeoisie and other classes of society, and the hypertrophy of conspicuous consumption exemplified by the lifestyle of this “caricature” of a bourgeoisie.

Indeed, the entire story of the “bourgeois phase” of postcolonial history told by “Misadventures of National Consciousness” may be read as an elaboration of this trope of atrophy and hypertrophy: a materialist dramaturgy of inverted temporal and structural relations. The biography of the postcolonial bourgeoisie becomes a perverse reversal of that of its metropolitan archetype. In the life history of *this* bourgeoisie there is no trace of that youthful impetuosity, no evidence of that Machiavellian *virtu* which Gramsci, Fanon’s precursor in orthodox revisionism, saw as the special quality of a class destined for hegemony. To the contrary, the postcolonial bourgeoisie is infected in its very infancy with the germs of senescence.

At the core of the national bourgeoisie of colonial countries, the spirit of indulgence is dominant. This is because, on a psychological level, it identifies itself with the Western bourgeoisie from whom it has learnt all its lessons. It follows the Western bourgeoisie along its path of negation and decadence without ever having emulated it in its first stages of exploration and invention, stages which are an acquisition of that Western bourgeoisie whatever the circumstances. In its beginnings, the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries identifies itself with the decadence of the bourgeoisie of the West. We must not suppose that it is blazing past stages; it is in fact beginning at the end. It is already senile before it has come to know the petulance, the fearlessness, the wilfulness of youth and adolescence. (DT, 98–99, WE, 153: RT)

This is, if you will, a veritable subversion of linear narrative, with a vengeance. And it is by no means restricted to relating the “precocious senility” of the national bourgeoisie in the economic life of the nation. The same inverted Trotskyism, the law of combined underdevelopment and accelerated degeneracy, is evident in the politics of the national bourgeoisie: “In the same way that the national bourgeoisie conjures away its phase of construction in order to throw itself into the enjoyment of its wealth, in parallel fashion in the institutional sphere it jumps the parliamentary phase and chooses a dictatorship of the national-socialist type” (DT, 113; WE, 172). Fanon would attempt to relate the emasculation of political life and the

emergence of the authoritarian state to the exigencies of peripheral capitalism and the peculiar position, interests, hopes, and fears of the lumpenbourgeoisie. In this he may have been the first to offer a sketch of a historical-materialist account of the repressive regimes that have dominated postcolonial history.

For Fanon, authoritarianism is almost natural to the political ascendancy of the national bourgeoisie and postcolonial politics. In addition to the apprenticeship in authoritarianism which the entire colonial experience amply provides, and over and above the psychology of dominance which, according to Fanon, colonial coercion engenders in the colonized, the political institutions and practices of the national bourgeoisie are superstructures of repression erected upon underdeveloped economic foundations.

Powerless economically, unable to bring about the existence of coherent social relations which are founded upon the principle of its domination as a class, the bourgeoisie chooses the solution that seems to it the easiest, that of the single party. It does not yet have the quiet conscience and the calm that economic power and the control of the state machine alone can give. It does not create a state that reassures the ordinary citizen, but rather one that rouses its anxiety. The state, which by its strength and discretion ought to inspire confidence and disarm and lull everybody to sleep, on the contrary seeks to impose itself in spectacular fashion. It flaunts itself, it jostles people and bullies them, thus intimating to the citizen that he is in continual danger. The single party is the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous, and cynical. (DT, 108; WE, 164-165; RT)

Whereas political power in metropolitan capitalist societies is "the product of the economic strength of the bourgeoisie," the bourgeois dictatorship of postcolonial regimes is a testimony to the economic powerlessness and political anxiety of the underdeveloped bourgeoisie—an anxiety bred by the scandalous asymmetry between its material condition and that of the mass of the people (DT, 109; WE, 166). And it is a function of the fact that absolute control of the state is the major means for the national bourgeoisie's misappropriation of national wealth.

But not even the repressive single party can provide an adequate institutional control over the compulsive and explosive logic of underdevelopment, conspicuous inequities in material existence, and

political anxiety. The national bourgeoisie "will discover the need for a popular leader to whom will fall the dual role of stabilising the regime and of perpetuating the domination of the bourgeoisie." With an anguished sense at once of historical inevitability and historical tragedy, Fanon evokes the degeneration of the role of the political leader from the putative incarnation of the general will to the knowing accomplice of class exploitation, "the moral power in whose shelter the weak and indigent bourgeoisie of the young nation decides to enrich itself": "Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political freedoms and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie" (DT, 108-109; WE, 165-166).

Explanations for these excrescences of political power proffered by the social science of the time were remarkably obfuscating. They ranged from neo-Weberian conceptions of the requirements of modernizing autocracies or the transformation of charismatic authority by an inner process of routinization, to condescending cultural relativist notions of the inherently antidemocratic nature of non-Western political cultures, to say nothing of justifying nationalist versions of this relativist thesis—claims to the effect that these political cultures are governed by nonadversarial principles of deliberation and consent that the imperialist West knows not of. Long before the bitter fruits of these vacuous and disingenuous theories came to be richly harvested, Fanon's text sent us off in an entirely different direction.

Fanon does not shrink from calling the emergent postcolonial regime fascist and from saying that it is the "dialectical result" of the "semicolonial" social formation bequeathed to the independent nation. We have noticed that a signal attribute of that social formation is to combine lack of control of the productive forces on the part of the national bourgeoisie with their monopolistic access to the appropriation of the surplus product. The result of this paradox, which produces massive "inequality in the acquisition of wealth" (DT, 113; WE, 171), is a falling rate of the legitimacy of political institutions and agencies. The repressive practices and violence of the state are the anxiogenic consequences of wealth too suddenly acquired and

too exclusively guarded. Bereft of internal cohesion as a capitalist *class*, the members of this “rapacious bourgeoisie” stand in desperate need of a *deus ex machina*, a leader to whom they abdicate all responsibility for political order, but also for the security of their privileges (DT, 123; WE, 184). The reason for this ingenious renunciation, the reason these “ruling classes” cannot govern, is that there is what Fanon calls a “spiritual wasteland at the heart of the nation” (ibid). Another way of putting this is that the national bourgeoisie lacks primary and enduring ties with the life of civil society, ties that might generate vital institutional mediations between society and state. In brief, the national bourgeoisie lacks the means to constitute what Gramsci called “ethico-political” authority and thus render the protective despotism of the leader unnecessary. It is this failure, Fanon suggests, that strikes Hobbesian fear in the hearts of the national bourgeoisie and drives it to the Bonapartist solution—the radical forfeiture of political responsibility, the better to safeguard its pillage of the surplus product.

The invocation of Gramsci is particularly justified by the distinctly Gramscian vocabulary which Fanon employs in describing the fate of one institution that might have served a mediating function: the political party. The need for a leader and the fate of the party, he tells us, are causally linked:

The leader is all the more necessary in that there is no party. During the period of the struggle for independence there was one right enough, a party led by the present leader. But since then this party has sadly disintegrated; nothing is left but the shell of a party, the name, the emblem, and the contrivance [*la devise*]. *The organic party* [*parti organique*], which ought to make possible the free exchange of ideas which have been elaborated according to the real needs of the masses, has been transformed into a trade union of individual interests. Since the proclamation of independence the party no longer helps the people to set out its demands, to become more aware of its needs and better able to establish its power. (DT, III-112; WE, 169-170, my emphasis: RT)

There is nothing wrong with Constance Farrington’s rendition of Fanon’s *le parti organique* as “the living party,” except that it misses the uncanny affinity of his vocabulary with a crucial Gramscian term, that of the *organic*. And there is nothing wrong with Farrington’s translation of *la devise* as “the motto,” a glossy emblazonry signify-

ing nothing. But I should like to think that the text also intends to suggest a contrast between the organic association, that which draws its vital pulse from the matrices of civil society and care for the people's needs, and this gossamer contrivance that is the postcolonial political party. For the *organic*—be it an institution, a discourse or a family of social agents—is in Gramsci the necessary and enabling condition of *hegemony*: that mode of social action in which class egotism is civilized by the partisan universal, the call of “popular-national” imperatives; that mode of political authority in which force is in consequence tamed by consent to imperfectly shared ends. Where the organic relation is missing, a class project becomes the pursuit of narrow “corporate-economic” interests, its discourse sheer duplicity, and its governance guileless violence.

Such is the state of affairs which “Misadventures” sees as the “dialectical result” of the social formation inherited by the new nation. Absent from the class relations of this social formation is the organic mediator. Of the putative candidate for this role, the national bourgeoisie, the text says that there is no “organic connection [*liaison organique*]” between it and the populace (DT, 95; WE, 148; RT). The national bourgeoisie is “closed in upon itself, cut off from the people, undermined by a congenital incapacity to think in terms of all the problems of the nation *as seen from the point of view of the whole of that nation*” (DT, 99; WE, 154, my emphasis; RT). The despotic leader becomes necessary for the same reason that the political party, after a fleeting moment of vitality, disintegrates. They are a joint testimony to the “congenital incapacity” of the national bourgeoisie to serve the function of organic mediation between the state and the vital and contending needs of civil society. There emerges the crassest form of class egotism, one in which the “ruling classes,” unable to forge even an internal cohesion among themselves, transform the political party into “a trade union of individual interests” and the state into the violent rule of the tyrant.

Where in Fanon's texts did we first encounter this Gramscian equation of the absence of organic mediation, the necessary condition of hegemony, with violence? Exactly in the account of the *differentia specifica* of the “colonial context”! It will be recalled that “Concerning Violence” contrasted the presence of legitimizing agencies and institutions in normal class societies—“ideological state apparatuses” in Louis Althusser's locution—with “the language of pure violence” that governed the colonial order (DT, 8; WE, 38). “Misadventures of

National Consciousness" redeploys a normative Gramscianism, this time to differentiate the politics of class in autocratic capitalist societies from the antipolitics of repression that characterizes the postcolonial social formation. The ruling classes of authentic capitalist societies, we are told, "govern with the help of their laws, their economic strength, and their police . . . They have created legitimacy, and they are strong in their own right" (DT, 120; WE, 180-181). The violence of the postcolonial state is, by contrast, the result of the class incapacities of the national bourgeoisie. And in a language that painfully repeats the metaphors of racial and colonial bondage, Fanon does not shrink from naming the political and ethical consequences of postcolonial violence at the hands of party, state, and tyrant. Just as "Concerning Violence" said that the colonized was "a being hemmed in [*un être parqué*]" (DT, 18; WE, 52), so we now read that the party as an instrument of state power "ensures that the people are hemmed in and immobilized. The party helps the government to hold the people down" (DT, 113; WE, 171). And just as the colonial project allegedly confiscated the historical agency of African humanity, rendering them a passive "inorganic background" for the demiurgic activity of the colonizer (DT, 17-18; WE, 51), so the enforcers of postcolonial order proclaim "that the vocation of the people is to obey, to go on obeying, and to be obedient till the end of time." Like yesterday's colonialist, the postcolonial leader "brings the people to a halt and persists in either expelling them from history or preventing them from taking root in it" (DT, 111; WE, 168-169).

If the story of racial and colonial bondage told by "Concerning Violence" is at all compelling, then the implications of the portrait of the postcolonial condition painted by "Misadventures" are truly devastating. Neocolonialism, this portrait suggests, is not simply a surreptitious recapture of national resources by external agents in the aftermath of flag independence. Neocolonialism is an internal state of affairs, the unmasked recolonization of human existence by the blackest of black skins.

Black skins as undisguised agents of internal neocolonialism wearing the discredited insignia of racial and national emancipators: this is the macabre reality that leads "Misadventures" to register a retroactive suspicion of nationalism and kindred ideological discourses which accompanied the national liberation movement and came to provide putative legitimation for postcolonial regimes. This nationalism Fanon portrays as a self-serving, contradictory, and antipolitical

rationalization of the interests of the national bourgeoisie. Self-serving because its inner purpose is merely to support the demands of the national bourgeoisie for "the nationalization of the economy and of the trading sectors," and more generally for "the nationalization and Africanization of offices" (DT, 98, 100; WE, 152, 155; RT). Now, such a demand for nationalization has nothing to do with a radical transformation of society. From the narrow horizons of the underdeveloped bourgeoisie, "nationalization does not mean placing the totality of the economy at the service of the nation and deciding to satisfy the needs of the nation. For them, nationalization does not mean ordering the state as an expression of new social relations whose growth it has been decided to encourage. To them, nationalisation quite simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period" (DT, 98; WE, 152).

And this nationalism is inherently contradictory because, while the national bourgeoisie's aggressive competition with alien commercial, managerial, and administrative classes compels it to espouse racism, and in fact to "come to power in the name of a narrow nationalism, in the name of the race" (DT, 106; WE, 163), the same class identifies affectively and intellectually with the "Other" whose place it wants to usurp. The national bourgeoisie is in fact the personification of the collusive identification of the colonized with the colonizer. Its strident nationalism collides with its exhibitionist and irresponsible rehash of "phrases that come straight out of European treaties on morals and political philosophy" (*ibid.*). This, then, is a racist nationalism, a defensive racism which is harmless to the interests of the Western bourgeoisie. And it is a tactical nationalism which can be exchanged without compunction for "vulgar tribalism" when, in the new scramble for Africanized offices, the source of competition is no longer the foreigner but the fellow African.

Last, "Misadventures" sees in this nationalism a profoundly anti-political ideology. Nationalism invokes the necessity of unity to silence the call issued by militant critics within the movement to face the challenge of an authentically national revolutionary discourse: that of defining and affirming a distinctive social and political program in spite of the common predicaments of postcolonial humanity; and, conversely, the challenge of searching for the common good in the teeth of recognizable differences of social circumstance and principle. Once more, "Misadventures" is quite prophetic in describing

the typical response of nationalist apologetics to this demand made by the revolutionary militant for a debate concerning ends and goals, on the assumption that the terms of social and political discourse are essentially contestable:

The militant champs on his bit. Now it is that the attitude taken up by certain militants during the struggle for liberation is seen to be justified. For the fact is that in the thick of the fight more than a few militants asked the leaders to formulate a doctrine, to define objectives, and to draw up a program. But under the pretext of safeguarding national unity, the leaders categorically refused to attempt such a task. The only worthwhile doctrine, it was repeatedly stated, is the union of the nation against colonialism. And on they went, armed with an impetuous slogan erected into a doctrine, while ideological activity was restricted to a series of variants on the theme of the right of peoples to self-determination, borne on the wind of history which would inevitably sweep away colonialism. When the militants asked whether the wind of history couldn't be a little more analysed, the leaders retorted with appeals to trust, the necessity of decolonization and its inevitability, and more to that effect. (DT, 112; WE, 170-171; RT)

The passage captures, quite inimitably, anticolonial nationalism's tried and tested devices of closure: the appeal to the primacy of the collective rights of the nation, even the race, as a whole; the plea of historical necessity; the invocation of what is mandated by the immediate circumstance; the deferral of dialogue and disputation concerning principles to some indeterminate future. From justifications of the one-party state in the first years of independence to more recent assertions of the priority of redressing inequities in the world-system over questions of domestic repression, the subjugation of women, and the status of human rights—this has been the familiar African version of what has been called “nationalism's existential formula.”⁴⁷

But in denouncing the nationalism of the national bourgeoisie for the class narcissism of its motives, the incoherence of its cultural allegiances, and the antipolitical character of its politics, Fanon had no intention of renouncing what he called “the will to particularity” that informs anti-imperialist and postcolonial consciousness (DT, 168; WE, 239). Quite the contrary: he simply charges the nationalism of the national bourgeoisie with being a woefully inadequate expres-

sion, indeed a perversion, of an authentic project of particularity. The vehicle for such an authentic project of particularity is *national consciousness*. That is why Fanon would insist that national consciousness "is not nationalism" (DT, 174; WE, 247): the one is as open to the critical negotiation of social and political ends from the vortex of contending claims as the other discourages precisely such an activity through mystification and coercion. And whenever Fanon appears to couple the two together in critical commentary, he clearly means the deformation of this fertile national consciousness in the hands of the national bourgeoisie. Such is the intent of the following passage: "Nationalism, that magnificent song that made the people rise against their oppressors, stops short, falters and dies away on the day that independence is proclaimed. Nationalism is not a political doctrine, nor a program. If you really wish your country to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step must be taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness" (DT, 137; WE, 203).

Captured by a repressive and mystificatory nationalism, the possibility of a common national idiom that might give voice to contending parties and principles, and in so doing generate "a doctrine concerning the division of wealth and social relations," miscarries. In the absence of such a common national discourse, a precocious "social and political consciousness" and the "fierce demands for social justice" it instigates will, Fanon warned, be "allied with often primitive tribalism" (DT, 138; WE, 203-204). Disfigured into a vacuous nationalism, the will to particularity fails to realize its promise as the necessary condition of a "new humanism." For the irony of colonialist racism is that in discriminating against a human collectivity, it assigns to them an indiscriminate place in the world. In Fanon's eyes, the historical vocation of national consciousness under the aegis of a hegemonic class was to dismantle this dual policy of segregation and homogenization. Exploding the enforced sameness, "the same bag" in which the metaphysics of racism "placed all the niggers," the mission of national consciousness was to reinstate the principle of individuation in interhuman affairs. The desire of postcolonial peoples to attach themselves to a particular "cultural matrix" is a concrete expression of this project of collective individuation (DT, 148; WE, 215; RT). Fanon sees no conflict between this will to particularity and the consciousness of a common humanity or the search for "universalizing values":

The consciousness of self is not the closing of a door to communication. Philosophic thought teaches us, on the contrary, that it is its guarantee. National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension . . . If man is what he does, then we will say that the most urgent thing today for the African intellectual is to build up his nation. If this act of political foundation is authentic, that is to say if it expresses the manifest will of the people and reveals the African peoples in their impatience, then the building of a nation is of necessity accompanied by the discovery and encouragement of universalizing values. Far from keeping aloof from other nations, therefore, it is national liberation which leads the nation to play its part on the stage of history. It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness grows. (DT, 174-175; WE, 247-248: RT)

Neither in this enterprise of restoring to postcolonial peoples their human universality and particularity, nor in the knowledge and mastery of productive forces, nor in the elaboration of a social and political vision characteristic of an ascendant class—in none of these respects is the national bourgeoisie of the postcolonial world found equal to its calling. The national bourgeoisie is thus “not even a replica of Europe, but its caricature” (DT, 116; WE, 175).

What, then, is the decisive achievement, and outcome, of Fanon's historical materialism? The answer: a disenchanted and dauntless enlightenment has now exhumed the critical knowledge of class from the antihistorical unconscious in which colonial racism and anticolonial nationalism conspired to entomb it. At the end of its arduous labor, however, at the end of this humanizing resuscitation of the knowledge of class, it has uncovered as a prime exhibit of historical universals this class which is bereft of knowledge, *this class which is not a class*. At every point of its location in the social formation—economy, politics, ideology—the national bourgeoisie, measured by convention, emerges as a figure of baneful in consequence.

Accordingly, we shall not hear in this materialist narrative even a faint echo of the eulogy which the authors of the *Communist Manifesto* in the name of historical justice delivered to the bourgeoisie—the first class in history, according to Marx and Engels, “to show what man's activity can bring about.”⁴⁸ The critique of this pathology of class will have to forgo that version of historicism which is abstemious of moral accusation and which permits itself to condemn

only that which, after completing its praiseworthy task in the service of history, then obstructs the full fruition of human possibilities it planted: "The struggle against the bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries is far from being a theoretical one. *It is not concerned with spelling out the condemnation levelled against it by the judgement of history.* The national bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries must not be opposed because it threatens to slow down the total harmonious development of the nation. It must be resolutely opposed because, literally, it is good for nothing" (DT, 116; WE, 175-176, my emphasis: RT). And "Misadventures" will not be guided by classical Marxism's understanding of historical time into envisaging the end of the "bourgeois phase" of postcolonial history as the outcome of a normal process of efflorescence and timely decrepitude:

In fact, the bourgeois phase in the history of underdeveloped countries is a completely useless phase. When this caste has vanished, devoured by its own contradictions, it will be seen that nothing new has happened since independence was proclaimed, and that everything must be started from scratch. The changeover will not take place at the level of the structures set up by the bourgeoisie during its reign, since that caste has done nothing more than take over unchanged the legacy of the economy, the thought and the institutions left by the colonialists. (DT, 117; WE, 176)

The prognosis that the bourgeois phase of postcolonial history will be a wholly barren one disallows a representation of its transcendence in those organic metaphors of historical materialism according to which "no social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society."⁴⁹ Rather, we are returned, by the ironic consequences of the very historical materialism here adumbrated, to the critical vocabulary of Marx before Marxism. This is the vision of a historical world "below the level of history":⁵⁰ a historical world which therefore calls upon itself not the calculated sobrieties of historicism, but the visceral language of outrage, denunciation, and calumny; a social formation whose transformation can be envisaged only as the outcome of a colossal act of refusal, can be invoked only in the accents of a desperate and compelling ethical obligation: "In the underdeveloped countries, the bourgeoisie *should not be allowed* to find the condi-

tions necessary for its existence and its growth. In other words, the combined effort of the masses led by a party and of intellectuals who are highly conscious and armed with revolutionary principles *ought to bar* the way to this useless and harmful bourgeoisie" (DT, 115; WE, 174-175, my emphasis). The materialist foundation of Fanon's idealist rhetoric now stands revealed. In the most arid materiality, it would seem, inhere the necessary and enabling conditions for a vision of historical transformation as the work of the collective will. For here, as Herbert Marcuse used to say, "the historical dialectic . . . affects dialectical materialism itself" by authorizing a deontological idiom of reversal and regeneration.⁵¹

But is this Fanon's last word on the national bourgeoisie of the colony, this refusal of a class on the grounds of its absolute sterility rather than its deciduous fate, one spelled out by "the judgment of history"? Not quite. Could it be that this inauthentic being, this bastard and deformed child of an impure modernity, might heed the call of national regeneration? We will hear in Fanon's calumny a whispered yet fervent hope: that the very circumstances which condemn the national bourgeoisie to "precocious senility" rather than historical obsolescence also contain the possibility of retrieving from its ranks some capacities acquired as civil servants of colonialism but now made available for the critical requirements of postcolonial society. But for such an openness to the destiny of the national bourgeoisie to be at all imaginable, Fanon will have to detect in every other candidate for hegemony, indeed in every sphere of society and putative revolutionary protagonist, serious defects and disabilities initially taken for signs of virtue. The ensuing ambiguity—what Fanon's teacher Aimé Césaire called "fertile complications"⁵²—will be the occasion of political judgment.

4

POLITICAL JUDGMENT

It is a long time since the starry sky that took away Kant's breath revealed the last of its secrets to us. And the moral law is not certain of itself.

—FRANTZ FANON, *Black Skin, White Masks*

An automatism of objective dialectics toward the good, with the comforting motto "Through the night to the light," simply does not exist.

—ERNST BLOCH, *Subjekt-Objekt*

THE AMBIGUITY OF EXCLUSION

Fanon as a "retrievalist,"¹ open to the possibility of a redeeming role for members of the national bourgeoisie? The image is an unconventional one. He is better known as one who turned with neoprimitivist revulsion against the city, against technology, against all that is modern, and, in particular, against that caricature of modernity's social protagonists in the colonial world, the national bourgeoisie. In the latter he is thought to have found little that is redeeming and redeemable, no virtues worth salvaging for the nascent necessities of the postcolonial world. It would seem that Fanon denounced the national bourgeoisie not simply because it is a copy, not even because it is a bad copy, of a praiseworthy original, but because it is a farcical version of a detestable archetype. Toward this perverse variant of a perverse being, Fanon allegedly registered an unmitigated repugnance, preferring to wager his hopes for the regeneration of the African world upon an uncorrupted peasantry and those marooned by abject penury on the outskirts of the city.² Thus, an argument that

Fanon's indignant criticism of the national bourgeoisie contains a project of recuperating some capacities from its ranks is inseparable from a reappraisal of his utterances concerning the putative surrogates for hegemony. Let us therefore preface the case for Fanon as a retrievalist with a brief consideration of the evidence for his alleged decision, after disqualifying the national bourgeoisie and the proletariat for hegemony, to assign that vocation to the peasantry and the lumpenproletariat, emblematic figures of dispossession and destitution, necessity and immediacy. To begin with, to what does Fanon's judgment of these surrogate agents owe its initial impulse, and subsequent revision?

We have learned from formalists such as Hayden White that a particular manner of telling a story, a particular *figural mode*, not only determines narrative structure but also shapes, organizes, even generates certain details and substantive propositions in a determinate discourse.³ Without subscribing to some theory of figural determinism, let us observe the relevance of the considerably less rigid notion of figural strategy as an *enabling constraint*⁴ for understanding Fanon's account of class. On this reading, the status of class in Fanon's historical and political vision—in particular the status of bourgeoisie and proletariat, peasantry and lumpenproletariat, in that vision—is as much a consequence of his understanding of the political economy of colonialism and neocolonialism as it is a representational effect of his inaugural figuration of the “colonial context.” That inaugural figuration presents history as an antidialectic. More precisely, it tells the story of the colonial encounter as an abrupt event of conquest and occupation without any immanent antecedents and redeeming consequences. And the outcome of this narrative? A relentless portrait of a politics of separation under the aegis of an “Aristotelian logic” of “reciprocal exclusivity,” a system of spatial compartments. The “originality of the colonial context,” says “Concerning Violence,” resides in the adamant bipolarity of the positions of colonizer and colonized, in this peculiar institution of difference lived as absolute contrariety. Therein lies the “totalitarian character,” the *violence*, of colonial domination as racial bondage: the extraordinary tyranny of a form of social division and human intercourse permitting of no reciprocal exchange between the opposing agents, no ironic substitutions or transformations of their places, positions, properties. A language of separation and subjugation un-

relieved by irony—such is the story of the social world which “Concerning Violence” is constrained to tell.

We have seen how it is that this story of the colonial context apprehended “in its immediacy,” this *model of the pure plantation economy of power and discourse*,⁵ comes unraveled under the impress of “new truths” made manifest by virtue of a disquieting enlightenment. A metaphor for these “new truths” is *class*. Yet for all the profound complications which the resurgent knowledge of class introduces into the reductive story of the racial divide, for all the revealing and perplexing changes which we would come to detect in “the physiognomy of the *dramatis personae*,” something of the inaugural plot of the colonial drama persists. That legacy consists in the fact that “class” would come to describe a *spatial relation*—a measure of proximity to or distance from colonial privilege, a modulation of the exclusionary politics of the “colonial context,” the degree to which the dream of the colonized to “take the place” of the colonizer is partially consummated or hopelessly doomed to frustration. It is this criterion of relative exclusion or relative admittance dictated by Fanon’s figural strategy—his manner of “emplotting” the colonial drama—which would shape a certain preliminary representation and judgment of the differing attitudes, political instincts, and projects of different classes.⁶ We will see that this preliminary verdict prefigures the notion of “epistemic privilege” in current “standpoint epistemology.” According to a recent critical account of that notion, “Epistemic privilege . . . becomes a function of the distance from the center.”⁷ But we will also see that Fanon ends up casting a skeptical look upon the consequences of exclusion and the alleged virtues of marginality.⁸

Construed, then, as a function of the degree of exclusion, the instinct of insurrection belongs first and foremost to those farthest removed from colonial privilege, those for whom the exclusionary politics of the “colonial context” retains to all intents and purposes its “original Manicheism,” the separatist closure of its “Aristotelian logic.” Stated differently, we might say that the most spontaneously insurrectionary forces are those for whom the ironization of the colonial drama by the language of class is an inconsequential event. Fanon marks out the peasantry and the lumpenproletariat as the two “classes” which, so to speak, bear testimony to the limits of liberalizing a colonial-racial system of “social closure.” They are “the most

spontaneously and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people" precisely because they are the most radically excluded. In the condition of these two "classes," the specific gravity of the colonial-racial system as a mode of domination in space finds its exemplary social form. I have placed the word "classes" in quotation marks advisedly. For if class positively connotes liberalization of social closure, if to belong to a class is to be a beneficiary of such a liberalization, then the class character of those groups that are all but absolutely excluded may be defined only by negation. Fanon has *rhetorical* warrant for calling these groups *déclassés* and for ascribing to them a spontaneous will to insurrection, a radicalism ordained by compelling vital necessity.

Of the peasantry, Fanon says: "The peasantry is systematically disregarded by the propaganda of most of the nationalist parties. Now, it is clear that in the colonial countries the peasantry alone is revolutionary. It has nothing to lose and everything to gain. The peasant, the *déclassé*, the starving man, is the first among the exploited to discover that violence alone pays. For him there is no compromise, no possibility of coming to terms" (DT, 25; WE, 61; RT). It is clear that Fanon's representation of the peasantry is no more radically empiricist than Marx's account of the proletariat; it is indeed a "generalized" portrait, as Jack Woddis has been quick to point out. But it is generalized from the reality of a landless peasantry expropriated by a settler European population. For it was, after all, the forceful expulsion of people from their land, the restraint of people from the free use of their indigenous space, which Fanon regarded as the definitive material feature of colonial domination, the material expression of the *occupation*. It is thus the expropriated peasants who incarnate "the most essential value, because the most concrete"—namely, the land (DT, 12; WE, 44). In so doing, the peasants stand in structural antithesis to the violence of the colonizer: "The mass of the country people have never ceased to think of the problem of their liberation except in terms of violence, in terms of taking back the land from the foreigners, in terms of *national struggle* and of armed insurrection" (DT, 78; WE, 126–127).

The statement that the peasants express their demand for land in terms of *national* struggle would appear to be clearly inconsistent with what Fanon has to say elsewhere concerning the local orientation and centrifugal tendencies of peasant radicalism. What he seems to mean here is that, geopolitically limited or localized though it may

be, peasant radicalism is inherently more inclusive and unyielding in its demands than the essentially individualist, particularist, and meliorist politics of the urban national bourgeoisie and the trade unions. Since the loss of land was a collective loss destructive of the material and moral foundations of communities, and irredeemable except as a result of the collective acquisition of political power, the demand for it is inherently expressive of a social consciousness whose concern for shared needs and common purposes contrasts sharply with the intrinsically particularist aspirations of the "bourgeois fraction" for individual mobility, a social consciousness which is viscerally subversive of the colonial order and therefore represents an intimation of national consciousness. It is this immediacy of thought and action which Fanon has in mind when he describes the peasantry as "the only spontaneously revolutionary force in the country" (DT, 75; WE, 123).

It must be stressed that Fanon here proposes no general theory of the peasantry. The above characterization of the peasantry is not only provisional, and subject, as we will see, to revision; it is also limited to the conditions of existence of the peasantry in the settler colonies of the African world. This specific context of Fanon's view of the peasantry has been ignored by his Marxist interpreters.⁹ Moreover, the ambiguity of the core term *spontaneity* seems to have gone unnoticed, although Fanon explicitly calls attention to it in the very title of the text in question: "Grandeur et faiblesse de la spontanéité," "Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness" (DT, 63-94; WE, 107-147). What could Fanon possibly mean when, in the course of lauding the spontaneous violence, moral resilience, and communitarian impulses of the peasantry, he murmurs audibly—in one of those critical ruminations with which his text is replete—"It is all so simple," deceptively and dangerously simple (DT, 78; WE, 127, my emphasis)? Those who have been quick to pin the label "peasant messianism" on Fanon have underscored only his preliminary celebration of the visceral virtues of the spontaneity of the peasantry and have failed to notice his criticism of its limitations: the "immediacy" and "instinctive" nature of the actions of the peasantry; the deformed character of their manifest fidelity to tradition; the induced "immobility" of their mode of life, which is the obverse side of its seeming moral "coherence" and integrity (ibid.). Many interpreters of Fanon have consequently missed his call for the political education of spontaneity. We shall see that if Fanon did not follow classical Marxism in denounc-

ing "the idiocy of rural life"¹⁰ and in disparaging the revolutionary potentiality of the peasantry, neither was he an uncritical devotee of the religion of rustic virtue. But before we turn to this problem, we must review what Fanon has to say about the other social group, the lumpenproletariat, who provide the second link in the chain of material necessity which binds the revolutionary imperative.

Fanon sees the lumpenproletariat as the urban extension of the landless peasantry: "The landless peasants who make up the lumpenproletariat, leave the country districts, where vital statistics are just so many insoluble problems, rush towards the towns, crowd into tin-shack settlements, and try to make their way into the ports and cities founded by colonial domination" (DT, 66; WE, 111). If the material symbol of the social question confronting the peasants who remain in the country is land (denied them by expropriation), the material symbol of the social question confronting the lumpenproletariat is bread (denied them by chronic unemployment). The lumpenproletariat, faced with the most basic of human needs, is that class to whose members every access to the treacherous advantages of colonialism and modernity is barred, and who are the resentful witnesses to the privileged servitude of the national bourgeoisie and proletariat, the living accusation against the distributive injustice of the colonial order, the class in colonial society which has no place in its scheme of gradations. In the lumpenproletariat the immediacy of material need and social consciousness which inaugurates the rebellion in the rural districts finds its urban equivalent:

In fact the rebellion, which began in the country districts, will filter into the towns through that fraction of the peasant population which is blocked on the outer fringe of the urban centers, that fraction which has not yet succeeded in finding a bone to gnaw in the colonial system. The men whom the growing population of the country districts and colonial expropriation have brought to desert their family holdings circle tirelessly around the different towns, hoping that one day or another they will be allowed inside. It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns, at the core of the lumpenproletariat, that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead. For the lumpenproletariat, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneously and most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people. (DT, 79; WE, 80).

Only these representatives of colonized humanity without class affiliation and aspiration—the damned of the earth, despoiled of all hope of approaching the “dividing line”—live the call of insurrection as a vital necessity. In a now celebrated passage, Fanon evokes the promise of a veritable transfiguration that might be theirs.

The shanty town sanctions the native’s biological decision to invade, at whatever cost and if necessary by the most cryptic methods, the enemy fortress. The lumpenproletariat, once it is constituted, brings all its forces to endanger the “security” of the town, and is the sign of the irrevocable decay, the gangrene ever present at the heart of colonial domination. So the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed and the petty criminals, urged on from behind, throw themselves into the struggle for liberation like stout working men. These classless idlers will by militant and decisive action discover the path that leads to nationhood. They won’t become reformed characters to please colonial society, fitting in with the morality of its rulers; quite on the contrary, they take for granted the impossibility of their entering the city save by hand-grenades and revolvers. These workless less-than-men are rehabilitated in their own eyes and in the eyes of history. The prostitutes, too, and the maids who are paid two pounds a month, all the hopeless dregs of humanity, all who turn in circles between suicide and madness, will recover their balance, once more go forward, and march proudly in the great procession of the awakened nation. (DT, 80–81; WE, 130)

It will be noted that virtually all the attributes which in Fanon’s preliminary verdict make the peasantry and the lumpenproletariat spontaneously rebellious are negative attributes: they are indices of privation, exclusion, and deformation. The social agents of the insurrection are defined by what they are *not*, by what they do *not* do, rather than by their activity, however alienated. Expropriated of their land, the peasants represent the subordination of the indigenous mode of production to the coercive control of alien interests. Excluded from productive activity, the “workless” lumpenproletariat represent the reduction of the colonized to that crude biological and subhistorical existence which Fanon describes elsewhere: “Under the colonial regime, anything may be done for a loaf of bread or a miserable sheep. *The relations of man with matter, with the world outside and with history are in the colonial period simply relations with food.* For a colonized man . . . living does not mean embodying

moral values or taking his place in the coherent and fruitful development of a world. To live means to avoid death. To exist means simply to maintain the vital process. Every date is a victory: not the result of work, but a victory felt as a triumph for life" (DT, 227; WE, 308, my emphasis). In this sense the twin demands for bread and land, "which may seem narrow and limited," are in fact representative of the "minimum demands," hence the most "inclusive" claims of the colonized (DT, 17; WE, 50). Fanon was not enamored of this reduction of human existential horizons to the requirements of survival; but neither did he share the aristocratic contempt of a Hannah Arendt for a revolutionary impulse driven by the compelling needs of the "vital process," the illicit invasion of the "public realm" by the call of necessity.¹¹

We will have to go back to Marx before Marxism to discover in the tradition he founded a similar vindication of conditions of exclusion, privation, dispossession, abjection, "radical need," as occasions of insurrectionary discontent, indeed as credentials for the representation of suffering humanity and its prospects of redemption. The *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction* framed the representative role of the proletariat in just such a language of exclusion: "A class must be formed which has *radical chains*, a class in civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal, and which does not claim a *particular redress* because the wrong which is done to it is not a *particular wrong* but *wrong in general* . . . This dissolution of society, as a particular class, is the *proletariat*."¹² Presently, "scientific socialism" will renounce this syntax of definition according to which conditions of human existence that call for a radical revolution are characterized by negation. In so doing scientific socialism will exclude exclusion—and its cognates—as paramount terms of critical discourse; it will come to disavow an interest in the proletariat framed by compassion, compassion for the excluded. The *Manifesto* pillories communist visions animated by interest in the proletariat "only because it is the most suffering class."¹³ Henceforth a language of class belonging, being, abilities, replaces the ancestral rhetoric of nothingness and abjection. What matters, what generates revolutionary action, is the place the proletariat occupies in the structure of production, its performance in "the harsh school of labor," the singular capacities it gains in that school. It would not

be an exaggeration to say that by virtue of this language the official testament of scientific socialism disowns a signal affective feature of its discursive antecedents—its childhood compassionate love of the excluded. The question is, must a political vision informed by historical materialism renounce compassion for the excluded as its central impulse? Can a truly visionary politics make such a renunciation except as an egregious and costly act of bad faith? Is it necessary to choose between a messianism of the dispossessed, the destitute, the desperate, and a coronation of the proletariat in the name of its privileged location in the division of labor and its acquisition of practical reason? Perhaps another construal of the relation of necessity to reason and revolution is possible—one, however, that may not quite satisfy the will to disambiguation harbored by purveyors of the hegemonic agent. In the figures of the peasantry and the lumpenproletariat, Fanon finds the necessary representative conditions for the biophysical explosion of social revolt; but he most certainly did not consider these to be sufficient conditions for a social revolution prefigurative of a rational politics of integral national existence.

Thus, no sooner does Fanon ascribe to the peasantry and the lumpenproletariat the virtues of insurrectionary spontaneity than he proceeds to turn his diagnostic eye upon the provenance and character of this spontaneity. It is as if the very conditions of existence which engender and vindicate “the spontaneous action of the country people” and the lumpenproletariat are precisely those which produce and disclose its radical limitations. “The strength and weakness of spontaneity” are coadunate consequences of the uneven exclusion and underdevelopment to which the political economy of colonialism subjects differing social spaces. What after all is the countryside, site of the peasant’s putative revolutionism, but the home of those among the colonized who are “excluded from the advantages of colonialism” as opposed to those “who manage to turn colonial exploitation to account”?

The country people are suspicious of the townsman . . . The townspeople are “traitors and knaves” who seem to get on well with the occupying powers, and do their best to get on well within the framework of the colonial system. This is why you often hear the country people say of town dwellers that they have no morals. *Here, we are not dealing with the classic opposition of town and country;*

it is rather the opposition between the colonized who is excluded from the advantages of colonialism and the one who manages to turn colonial exploitation to his account. (DT, 67; WE, 112, my emphasis: RT)

Town and country do not embody a "dual economy"; still less do they represent two heterogeneous cultural and moral orders, the one of civilized depravity and the other of perdurable rectitude. The country's indictment of the city's immorality and infidelity to things African is not altogether disinterested; it is in fact the barely veiled product of resentment, a protest against the country's induced disadvantage in the regional distribution of alienating socioeconomic and cultural operations. Town and country, then, are not identical; but neither are they instances of a "classic [dualistic] opposition." They have more, negatively, in common than what the immediate manifestation and assertion of difference suggest.

Nor is the lumpenproletariat—that urban extension of the disinherited peasantry—the repository of intransigent virtue, the carrier of revolutionary consciousness free from the promptings of envy and alienated aspirations. It is not as if these "classless" people have renounced the corrupting temptations of the city and withdrawn, in a purist commitment to cultural authenticity, to "the outer fringe of the urban centers." Invoking his spatial metaphor of the divided "zones," Fanon says that these men and women, too, hope that "one day or another they will be allowed inside," inside the city of privilege; but they know that a negotiated right of entrance is barred to them, lacking as they do the material and intellectual credentials of the "elites"; and so "they take for granted the impossibility of their entering the city save by the force of hand-grenades and revolvers." By the "spontaneity" of this social group, then, Fanon means precisely their resentful reaction to the blockage of all paths of mediation, their enforced irreverence toward those "rites of passage" of which he spoke in his phenomenology of social hierarchy among the colonized in *Black Skin, White Masks*. But the obverse side of the lumpenproletariat's privileged freedom from the civil politics of social mobility is their being injured to "physiological wretchedness, humiliation and irresponsibility" (DT, 86; WE, 136), their tragic ignorance of the bonds of moral and political obligation. It is true that Fanon did not make sharp differentiations among the lumpenproletariat, as Amílcar Cabral would do in his analysis of which sections

of that class would be loyal to the national liberation movement and which sections would be recruited into the repressive forces of the colonial state.¹⁴ What he gives us is, rather, a composite portrait of the class as a whole.

The result of Fanon's critical inspection of the spontaneity of the peasantry and the lumpenproletariat is that he calls for its political transformation. Measured by the imperatives of a national revolutionary practice, to say nothing of the demands of postcolonial existence, the discourse of spontaneity reveals itself to be "obscurantist," "retrograde," "emotional," "obscure" (DT, 72-73; WE, 120). What began as a vindication of the untamed voice of the excluded and the dispossessed ends up as a troubled depiction of what a Hegelian narrative might describe as defective "moments of ethical life"—inadequate forms of epistemic and political community—characteristic of the designated social spaces and agents. If Fanon is deeply critical of the enlightenment nationalist's authoritarian contempt for "little local histories" (DT, 67; WE, 113), he is also quite disturbed by a will to unity informed entirely by local knowledge, by a sense of the nation as a conglomeration of disparate claims and ancestral bonds. He detects such a flawed version of unity in the spontaneous action of the country.

On every hill a government in miniature is formed and takes over power. Everywhere—in the valleys and in the forests, in the jungle and in the villages—we find a national authority. Each man or woman brings the nation to life by his or her action, and is pledged to ensure its triumph in their locality. *We are dealing with a strategy of immediacy which is both radical and totalitarian*: the aim and the program of each spontaneously constituted group is local liberation. If the nation is everywhere, then she is here. One step further, and only here is she to be found. Tactics are mistaken for strategy. The art of politics is simply transformed into the art of war; the political militant is the fighter. To fight the war and to take part in politics: the two things become one and the same.

This people that has lost its birthright, that is used to living in the narrow circle of feuds and rivalries, will now proceed in an atmosphere of solemnity to cleanse and purify the face of the nation as it appears in the various localities. In a veritable collective ecstasy, families which have always been traditional enemies decide to rub out old scores and to forgive and forget. There are numerous

reconciliations. Long-buried but unforgettable hatreds are brought to light once more, so that they may more surely be rooted out. The taking on of nationhood involves a growth of consciousness. National unity is first the unity of a group, the disappearance of old quarrels and the final liquidation of unspoken grievances. At the same time, forgiveness and purification include those natives who by their activities and by their complicity with the occupier have dishonoured their country.

On the other hand, traitors and those who have sold out to the enemy will be judged and punished. In undertaking this onward march, the people legislates, finds itself and wills itself to sovereignty. In every corner that is thus awakened from the colonial slumber, life is lived at an impossibly high temperature. There is a permanent out-pouring in all the villages of spectacular generosity, of disarming kindness, and willingness, which can never be doubted, to die for the "cause." All this is evocative of a confraternity, a church and a mystical body of belief at one and the same time. No native can remain unmoved by this new rhythm which leads the nation on. Messengers are dispatched to neighbouring tribes. They constitute the first system of intercommunication in the rebellion, and bring movement and cadence to districts which are still motionless. Even tribes whose stubborn rivalry is well known now disarm with joyful tears and pledge help and succour to each other. Marching shoulder to shoulder in the armed struggle, these men join with those who yesterday were their enemies. The circle of the nation widens and fresh ambushes to entrap the enemy hail the entry of new tribes upon the scene. Each village finds that it is itself both an absolute agent of revolution, and also a link in the chain of action. (DT, 82-83; WE, 131-133, my emphasis)

But this embattled group mystically enchanted by its carnal solidarity is not yet a body politic possessing a rational consciousness of its participation in national deeds and purposes. The generosity of the embrace with which old antagonisms are resolved is cursed with an intransigent particularism; what appears to be an intimation of the nascent national reality in this orgy of reconciliation and fraternity is contradicted by the atavistic and centrifugal sources from which the countryside acquires its self-understanding and derives the impulse toward insurrection: a narrow and passionate traditionalism, the inchoate and intractable processes of *rumor* and folkloric *mem-*

ory. The country's spontaneous rebellion is inspired all too often by religiosity, opposition to innovations, and rumors of repressive measures unleashed by the government against the peasantry (DT, 72; WE, 120). Again, this rebellion derives its historical justification and moral inspiration not so much from the future, the emergent sense of nationality, as from the past, whether this takes the form of a tearful remembrance of the first *local* heroic resistance against the colonial conquest (DT, 68; WE, 114) or is expressed in the allegiance to a particular ethnic group, with its traditional institutions and its "local history" embodied in the authority of a traditional chief, say, a Buthelezi. The whole is here immediately present in the local and the particular, universality in ethnicity.

Such a critical view of the structure of the rural peasantry's thought and action is of course the exact opposite of an antimodern romanticization of social spaces and agents that may be thought of as repositories of tradition. Jack Woddis misunderstands Fanon's stance when he ascribes to him a "sympathy for the chiefs," a sympathy allegedly "linked with his conception of the role of traditional society as the only genuinely national expression in contrast to the modern, Western ideas coming from the towns."¹⁵ Woddis evidently ignores Fanon's account of the shared history of town and country, tradition and modernity, in the colonial context. There is no question, on Fanon's view, of bestowing a badge of moral superiority upon one particular social space, as though it enjoyed a serene security from colonial history and its aftermath. Rather, Fanon was worried that allegiance to "tradition," from which the spontaneous action of the country people and ethnic communities often derived its inspiration, contained the seeds of centrifugal "federalism," to say nothing of separatist and genocidal forms of tribalism (DT, 68; WE, 114). With his eyes set on the postcolonial future, Fanon saw—quite prophetically, it turns out—that we have here a potent admixture of difference, solidarity, and spontaneity that will prove fatal to a national politics of the universal, including the politics of class.

A heterodox assent to convention—the obligation to name the paramount revolutionary agents—had sent Fanon to the country and the periphery of the city, there to examine surrogates for the archetypal but absent protagonists. He is not unambiguously enamored of what he finds. He concludes that it is not here in this geography of resentful destitution and atavistic solidarity that, as he puts it elsewhere, "the nation unveils its being" (SR, 77; DC, 92), achieves an

adequation to its "truth." The social spaces of spontaneity are epicenters of division and differentiation which—unlike, say, class versions of social division and consciousness—lack an orientation to the universal as national context. And this was indeed Fanon's fear and premonition: the generation of a social consciousness dismembered in the spontaneous immediacy of its outrage from "national consciousness," a social consciousness that has nowhere to go except the way of separatist tribalism. Perhaps no discrete configuration of social spaces can adequately house the nation's "being" and authorize the integral story it would "tell about itself" (SR, 78; DC, 93). Fanon does not conflate this integral story, a critical achievement of what he would call "revolutionary pedagogy," with the particularist communitarianism spawned by exclusion, customary allegiance, primordial solidarity. In the will to revolt forged by the call of necessity, in the practice of community dictated by ancestral ties, Fanon ultimately sees not the sturdy anchorage of national unity but rather its potential capsizing: "The leaders of the rebellion literally see the nation capsizing. Whole tribes join up as harkis, and, using the modern weapons that they have been given, go on the warpath and invade the territory of the neighbouring tribe, which for this occasion has been labelled as nationalist. That unanimity in battle, so fruitful and grandiose in the first days of the rebellion, undergoes a change. National unity crumbles away" (DT, 68; WE, 138). The means employed to fray the fledgling nation—"modern weapons" or sticks and stones—will differ from place to place. What matters is that the disintegration they effect is the consequence of structures of experience that are all-too-immediate, fatally defective. Fanon was nothing if not prescient when he observed, as if to temper the heady euphoria of immediate unity, that "the warming light-giving center where the human being and citizen develop and enrich their experience in wider and still wider fields does not yet exist" (DT, 41; WE, 81: RT). If these ever-enlarging fields of experience are to be nurtured, if shared ends no less than contending interests are to be voiced in the language of the universal, then "*the scattering of the nation must be corrected and overcome [dépassé]*" (DT, 84; WE, 135; my emphasis : RT).

I have deliberately accentuated the Hegelian resonances of Fanon's vocabulary—the better to highlight his deviation from Hegel. A succession of compelling but defective modes of differentiation and solidarity are to be dialectically overcome by the gathering of the

nation's "being," in which difference and unity will find a home of unprecedented richness. But the labor of transcendence is here mandated not by the necessary structures of thought, as Hegel would have it, but by what Fanon calls the "historical necessity" of "political education" (DT, 86; WE, 138). Now, if the desperate solidarity of the destitute and the dispossessed, and the local knowledges of ethnic communities, are not and cannot be sufficient conditions for an open and coherent postcolonial way of life, then perhaps no social constituency may be absolutely excluded from the project of political education. The moral status of social agents hitherto deemed to be collectively and irredeemably compromised—say, segments of the national bourgeoisie—needs to be reconsidered. Could it be that the texture of the postcolonial nation's discourse will find a place for the vocabulary of that agent previously accused of "dressing like a European, speaking the European's language, working with him, sometimes even living in the same district . . . a turncoat who has betrayed everything that goes to make up the national heritage" (DT, 67; WE, 112)? What are the enabling conditions for this ironic retrieval of the collaborator's secrets for the ends of national regeneration?

REPRIEVE OF PRODIGAL REASON

At the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon repudiates a race-reductionist foundationalism of moral judgment and conduct. He does so in the name of the irreducible ambiguity of the moral law and the inescapable freedom of the moral subject: "It was not the black world that laid down my course of conduct. My black skin is not the wrapping of specific values. It is a long time since the starry sky that took away Kant's breath revealed the last of its secrets to us. And the moral law is not certain of itself" (PN, 204; BS, 227). When the "later" Fanon repudiates an "objective dialectic" of history, he does so on the premise that the outcome of decolonization and the ordering principles of the postcolonial world must be a matter of judgment. But unlike the radical ethical voluntarism of a successor thinker like Ayi Kwei Armah,¹⁶ Fanon's dialectic, for all its openness, remains a *dialectic*—that is to say, a vision of historical possibilities as determinate prospects not entirely left to the unencumbered freedom and optional decision of the moral subject. For such a dialectic

takes its bearings from the recognition of a constraining consequence of colonial history: the fact, namely, that the material and symbolic relations implanted in the colonial context engender social agents caught in a tangled web of undeniable antagonism and ironic kinship, manifest conflict and latent complicity; social agents who are therefore capable of the narrowest collective egotism as of the most selfless commitment to the pursuit of popular-national ends. We are now in a position to see more clearly why Fanon's calumny against the national bourgeoisie as an undifferentiated class of baneful incompetents is not his last word on the matter.

In his account of the vicissitudes of the national liberation movement, Fanon identifies a militant group within the nationalist parties that comes to renounce the venality and reformism of the leadership (DT, 94; WE, 147). Expelled from the parties, these militants team up with dissident intellectuals spawned in the interstices of the national bourgeoisie to form what Fanon calls the "revolutionary minority," or the "illegalists" (DT, 76-77; WE, 124-125). Their mission? To forge a regenerative union between the insurrectionary demands of the destitute of the city and spontaneous actions of the dispossessed of the country. Could it be that this account of "the meeting of revolutionaries coming from the towns and country dwellers" has a normative import beyond the situational, strategic requirements of the national liberation movement (DT, 30; WE, 68)? I will argue that it does. Beneath the realist guise of this narrative is Fanon's exhortative enactment of what is to be done in the face of emergent postcolonial necessities: a critical dialogue between avatars of the differing life-worlds which inhabit the hybrid body of the nascent society. In this sense, the story of the "meeting" is a symbolic narrative of political judgment in the postcolonial condition. In light of the vitriolic denunciation of the national bourgeoisie, it would seem strange that Fanon would admit representatives of a collusive and profligate class to this "meeting." The question then is this: What prompts some members of this class to participate in, even to spearhead, this project of the nation's self-gathering and self-renewal? What accounts for this act of class apostasy and enables the reprieve of prodigal reason?

Fanon's explanation for the redeeming role of the dissident intelligentsia is, like his explanation for the incapacities and perfidy of the national bourgeoisie as a whole, at once materialist and idealist. He tells us that:

In those underdeveloped countries which accede to independence, there almost always exists a small number of honest intellectuals, who have no precise ideas about politics, but who instinctively distrust the race for positions and pensions which is symptomatic of the early days of independence in colonized countries. The personal situation of these men (breadwinners of large families) or their background (difficult experiences and a strictly moral upbringing) explains their manifest contempt for profiteers and schemers. (DT, 117-118; WE, 177: RT)

One might object that this explanation is but a species of moral subjectivism wrapped in a vulgar materialism. One would want to know what structural reasons there are for the possibility of class apostasy beyond this moral point of view, this visceral revulsion against scandalous distributive injustice on the part of, say, the underpaid academic supporting an extended family. The answer, Fanon suggests, is to be found in the underdevelopment of class formation. A signal feature of this underdevelopment is that the national bourgeoisie is, according to Fanon, "incapable of constituting itself as a class." The result is a relative tenuousness of class affiliation. In the circumstances, there is an inevitable atrophy of an organic intelligentsia, one living in intimate albeit critical kinship with a socioeconomically powerful and cohesive class, acting at once as the latter's gadfly and its moral guarantor, both pathfinder and guardian of a distinctive social project. Indeed, so picayune is the material power of the national bourgeoisie (the agnate class of the radical intelligentsia), and so fruitless its ambitions, that Fanon pronounces a curse upon its house in one breath and in the next breath appears to invite the entire class to "repudiate its own nature," to renounce a class consciousness which amounts to little more than an inconsequential corporate-economic narcissism:

Under the colonial system, a bourgeoisie which accumulates capital is an impossible phenomenon. Now, precisely, it would seem that the historical vocation of an authentic national bourgeoisie in an underdeveloped country is to repudiate its own nature in so far as it is bourgeois, that is to say in so far as it is the tool of capitalism, and to make itself the willing slave of that revolutionary capital which is the people. In an underdeveloped country an authentic national bourgeoisie ought to consider as its bounden duty to betray the calling fate has marked out for it, and to put itself to school

with the people: in other words to put at the people's disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it has snatched when going through the colonial universities. (DT, 96-97; WE, 150: RT)

The story of the national bourgeoisie's bastard origins, congenital disabilities, and arrested growth appears to have taken an ironic twist in plot, with this suggestion of constraint as an enabling condition, as a release from the bonds of historical determination. Is it the disciple of Sartre or the follower of Marx who invokes this irony of necessity as the occasion of freedom? The disciple of Sartre, Fanon refuses to condemn the national bourgeoisie to an unalterable captivity to a farcical fate. The follower of Marx, he would not expect the class in its entirety to accept the invitation to self-renunciation, heeding in unison Amílcar Cabral's kindred exhortation of the "petty-bourgeoisie" to "commit suicide as a class in order to be reborn as revolutionary workers."¹⁷ For, clearly, however minor the status of the national bourgeoisie in the production relations of world capitalism, this status is by no means nugatory. Consequently, the national bourgeoisie is confronted not with one choice and one choice alone, but with alternatives; differing political paths are open to differing constituencies within the class:

It is all the easier to neutralise this bourgeois class in that, as we have seen, it is numerically, intellectually and economically weak. In the colonized territories, the bourgeois caste draws its strength after independence chiefly from agreements reached with the former colonial power. The national bourgeoisie has all the more opportunity to take over from the oppressor since it has been given time for a leisurely *tête-à-tête* with the ex-colonial power. But deep-rooted contradictions undermine the ranks of that bourgeoisie; it is this that gives the observer an impression of instability. There is not as yet a homogeneity of caste. Many intellectuals, for example, condemn this regime based on the domination of the few. In underdeveloped countries, there are certain members of the *élite*, intellectuals and civil servants, who are sincere, who feel the necessity for a planned economy, the outlawing of profiteers and the strict prohibition of attempts at mystification. In addition, such men fight in a certain measure for the mass participation of the people in the ordering of public affairs. (DT, 117; WE, 176-177)

It is out of this class internally torn by "deep-rooted contradictions," lacking cohesion or "homogeneity of caste," distinguished more by its possession of "intellectual and technical capital" than by ownership of the means of production, that the revolutionary intellectuals emerge. What distinguishes them from the bourgeois nationalists, then, is not their class origins but their *epistemic and political project*. Of the bourgeois nationalists, Fanon says that "they inevitably end up producing an ersatz conflict. They use their brothers' slavery to shame the slave-drivers or to provide an ideological policy of quaint humanitarianism for their oppressors' financial competitors" (DT, 30; WE, 67). And of the ambivalent intentions of nationalism, "the will to break colonialism" as opposed to the desire to "come to a friendly agreement with it," most anticolonial nationalists obey the second impulse (DT, 75-76; WE, 124). This reformist accommodation is the defining "nature of their action," which Fanon is prepared to regard as being "progressive all the same" (DT, 31; WE, 68).

Fanon suggests that this limited, reformist nature of the bourgeois nationalists' *action* is not unrelated to the character of their *discourse*. He writes: "In their discourse the political leaders 'name' the nation. The demands of the colonized are thereby given a *form*. There is no *content*, there is no social and political program. There is merely a vague outline, which is nevertheless national in form, what may be described as the minimum demand" (DT, 31; WE, 68, my emphasis: RT). Bourgeois anticolonial nationalism is accommodationist and reformist in deed to the extent that it is formal and bereft of substantive content in word. It names the nation as a simple and immediate union of racial subjects asserting a collective claim to independence from the empire. The cost of this formal universality is a calculated silence concerning social and political ends. It is the mission of a radical anti-imperialist discourse to break this spell of form, this indeterminate invocation of a unity which is given by racial membership. A radical anti-imperialist commitment is precisely one that regards the national universal as a project to be achieved by virtue of substantive disputation by social interlocutors. It must therefore insist on the "internal pluralism" of contestable ends and means.¹⁸ This is exactly what Fanon's revolutionary intellectuals are called upon to do: "In the first place, when intellectual elements have carried out a prolonged analysis of the true nature of colonialism

and of the international situation, they will begin to criticize the ideological void of the national party and the poverty of its tactics and strategy. They begin to question their leaders ceaselessly on crucial points: 'What is nationalism? What sense do you give to this word? What is its meaning? Independence for what? And in the first place, how do you propose to achieve it?' They ask these questions concerning ends, and at the same time insist that the problems of means should be vigorously tackled" (DT, 76; WE, 124). A nationalist discourse which disallows critical introspection, a discourse which asks no questions and sees no internal iniquities, is now faced with a demand for spelling out social and political objectives prompted by premonitions of indigenous injustice and conflict.

But neither the ambiguity of their class position, nor the force of their moral commitments, nor the character of their discourse will render the resources of the radical intelligentsia efficacious. It would be the worst kind of vanguardist voluntarism to see these resources as self-sufficient agents of national renewal. Not even in the context of the national liberation movement's strategic requirements does Fanon see any warrant for the autocracy of reason. The "illegal party" of the city is no cabal of intellectuals and professional revolutionaries; it draws its membership from "unskilled workers, seasonal labourers, and even sometimes the chronically unemployed," as well as from the dissident intelligentsia. It is this explosive alliance which invites repression by colonial authorities and the opposition of bourgeois nationalists. A retreat from the city becomes imperative.

Boycotted by the towns, those men first settle in the outskirts of the suburbs. But the police network traps them and forces them to leave the town for good, and to quit the scenes of political struggle. They fall back towards the countryside and the mountains, towards the peasant people. From the beginning, the peasantry closes in around them, and protects them from being pursued by the police. The militant nationalist who decides to throw in his lot with the country people instead of playing hide-and-seek with the police in urban centers will lose nothing. The peasants' cloak will wrap him around with a gentleness and firmness that he never suspected. These men, who are in fact exiled to the backwoods, who are cut off from the urban background against which they had defined their ideas of the nation and of the political struggle, these men have in fact become "Maquisards." Since they are obliged to move about

the whole time in order to escape from the police, often at night so as not to attract attention, they will have good reason to wander through their country and to get to know it. The cafés are forgotten; so are the arguments about the next elections or the spitefulness of some policeman or other. Their ears hear the true voice of the country, and their eyes take in the great and infinite poverty of the people. They realize the precious time that has been wasted in useless commentaries upon the colonial regime. They finally come to understand that the changeover will not be a reform, not a bettering of things. They come to understand, with a sort of bewilderment that will henceforth never quite leave them, that political agitation in the towns will always be powerless to modify or overthrow the colonial system. (DT, 77-78; WE, 126)

The lyricism of this account of mutual revelation and consensual relations between the peasantry and the urban revolutionaries has called forth the ridicule and spirited refutations of realists and scientific analysts. In the light of the experiences of Guevara in Bolivia and Cabral in Guinea-Bissau, Fanon's account is less than true to the facts. But no one knew better than Fanon himself the limitations of the peasants' social consciousness. How do we explain Fanon's caveats about the spontaneous movement of the peasantry if we read his evocation of the meeting between urban revolutionaries and country dwellers as a pure description—unless perhaps we attribute to Fanon's imagination a perverse delight in self-contradiction? A literal reading of this text is unlikely to get us very far. I have suggested that we read it as a symbolic account of what is to be done if the nascent nation's disparate resources are to be gathered for its self-renewal. I take my interpretive cue from Fanon's claim that "notions of nation [*les notions de nation*]"—lived categories of sociopolitical experience—defined in abstraction from the whole are transcended when the dissident militants in flight are forced to "traverse their country and to get to know it." The formal universality by which reformist nationalism names the nation will have to be traded for a substantive universality generated by intimate knowledge of the country's variegated parts. To the radical intelligentsia, dissident members of the national bourgeoisie, Fanon assigns a crucial role in this work of fashioning what Césaire called a "common sense" out of differing languages of existence.

At a first level of meaning, then, the story of the meeting of urban

militants and rural insurgents addresses an archetypal desire in political experience: the desire for a principle of integration evoked by the proverbial metaphor of uniting the “head” and the “body” of a community in crisis. The immediate occasion of this desire and image in Fanon’s text is the revolutionary situation. The specific context is a social formation whose inner cohesion—the interrelatedness of its parts and particulars—has been especially undermined by the uneven development of colonial capitalism. The story of the meeting thus speaks to an archetypal political desire instantiated, with all its specific gravity, in the peculiarities of a dependent capitalist society. The meeting is called upon to treat the revolutionary situation as a critical opportunity to attend to the surplus alienation of the nation’s parts from one another. For so long as the urban and rural movements follow their different paths and thus perpetuate the historical antinomy of town and country or the material and moral incoherence of colonized society, the nascent nation, writes Fanon, “may well have a rational, even progressive, head to it; but its immense body will remain weak, stubborn and non-cooperative” (DT, 71; WE, 118: RT). As a first step toward the achievement of an integral albeit variegated identity, the “meeting” is called upon to subject the disparate aims of the revolution’s differing constituencies to a political education.

The leaders who have fled from the useless political activity of the towns rediscover politics, no longer as a way of lulling people to sleep nor as a means of mystification, but as the only method of intensifying the struggle and of preparing the people to undertake the governing of their country clearly and lucidly. The leaders of the rebellion come to see that peasant uprisings, however majestic they are, need to be controlled and directed into certain channels. *The leaders are led to renounce the movement in so far as it can be termed a peasant revolt, and to transform it into a revolutionary war.* They discover that the success of the struggle presupposes clear objectives, decisive choice of means and above all the need for the mass of the people to realize that their unorganized efforts can only be a temporary dynamic. You can hold out for three days—maybe even for three months—on the strength of the admixture of sheer resentment contained in the mass of the people; but you won’t win a national war, you’ll never overthrow the terrible enemy machine, and you won’t change human beings if you forget to raise the

standard of consciousness of the combatant. Neither stubborn courage nor fine slogans are enough. (DT, 84-85; WE, 135-136, my emphasis)

The substitution of the "art of war" for the "art of politics," a substitution that spontaneity both in its urban and rural forms demanded, is to be overcome. In place of the anarchic particularisms of spontaneous revolts, a mirror of the essential disarticulation of the society's vital material and moral impulses, the people are to cultivate a "political organism" that will enable difference to be manifested in a national context (DT, 91; WE, 143).

The outcome which Fanon envisages for this meeting of interlocutors from different social spaces is a "mutual current of enlightenment and enrichment" (DT, 91; WE, 143). But if this is to be a true exercise in reciprocity and a new experience of communicative action, then the radical intelligentsia will have to renounce their past no less than their present. Schooled in the Western ideology of the supremacy of the subject and the special authoritarianism of colonial discourse, the "native intellectual," writes Fanon, has historically evinced a peculiar "inaptitude to engage in dialogue; for he does not know how to make himself inessential in the face of the object or an idea" (DT, 16; WE, 49; RT). Embarrassed by his erstwhile posture of subjective certainty, the native intellectual turned *maquisard* is now ready to disavow his claim to rational knowledge altogether: "The danger that will haunt him continually is that of embracing populism; he becomes a sort of yes-man who nods assent at every word coming from the people, which he interprets as considered judgments" (*ibid.*: RT). Fanon does not endorse this romance of the people and, with it, the guilt-ridden renunciation of reason. What he says of the geopolitical requirements of the national liberation movement has a symbolic significance far beyond its immediate strategic context: "The leaders of the rising . . . realise that some day or another the rebellion must come to include the towns. This awareness is not fortuitous; it is the crowning point of the dialectic which reigns over the development of an armed struggle for national liberation" (DT, 79; WE, 128). I take Fanon's talk of a dialectical necessity which determines the return to the city to mean that the journey of enlightenment to which the agents of national regeneration are summoned cannot end in the country, indeed cannot end in any one discrete social space as the ultimate site of the collective will. In the dialectical

ordering of the emancipatory process and of postcolonial society, hegemony does not belong, metonymically, to a privileged part, the space of a collective subject promoted to a representative status by the extremity of its abjection or exclusion or suffering. But neither does it belong to a whole that exacts unanimity in defiance of manifest differences and discord. The outcome of the "meeting" is to be neither the reign of an undivided truth nor the disarray of particular wills and local knowledges, but the generation of a common vocabulary of disputation and concerted action: universal understandings of contestable claims. It is to this common vocabulary, this emergent structure, rather than a paramount subject such as Gramsci's "fundamental class," that hegemony belongs.

How, then, could we characterize the role of the radical intelligentsia in the formation of a structure of understanding and action for which no discrete social agent can claim the status of a constitutive subject? In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon describes the function of the native intellectuals in relation to colonial discourse as that of *interpreters* (PN, 34; BS, 19). If we extend this description to cover the range of characteristic competencies and resources at the disposal of the native intelligentsia, we might speak of their postcolonial function as a *hermeneutic vocation*. Like the hegemonic activity of Gramsci's "fundamental class" and its organic intellectuals—but enabled by an authority that falls short of the power of a constitutive subject—the hermeneutic work of the radical intellectuals must precede, accompany, and continue after the conquest of political power, here the attainment of formal independence. That is why the retreat into the country and the return to the city constitute the defining symbolism of their calling, that of being participant interpreters of the discordant news and needs of the new national society. "Their retreat into the country," writes Fanon, "was both a flight from persecution and a sign of their distrust for the old political formations" (DT, 79; WE, 128; RT). Returning to the city with an educated understanding of the national society's variegated idioms of life, affections, and aversions, these militants are in a position to aid in ending the mutual, indiscriminate suspicion of political and cultural formations—old and new—characteristic of different parts of the social body. In the company of allied social agents from the city and the country, the radical intelligentsia are called upon to continue this work of critical interlocation beyond the time of formal independence.

At the heart of this permanent revolution of meaning in Fanon's vision is the rebirth of the colonized as an autonomous modern subject: autonomous as a participant in the instrumental and communicative practices conducive to the crowning goal of Fanon's dialectic of experience—a "new humanism." This will require the liberation of modernity from colonial and neocolonial underdevelopment, and the democratic salvaging of the radical intelligentsia's "technical and intellectual capital" from alienating usages.

A homeopathic redemption of modernity under the auspices of a radical postcolonial democracy? An audacious and perhaps surprising vision on the part of a thinker for whom modernity and its humanist pretensions are inseparable from the violence of the Western project. Or so it would seem to those readers of Fanon who find in him something bordering on a xenophobic cultural nationalism inimical to "the whole heritage of Europe,"¹⁹ or to those who discern in his texts that deep-seated romance with the African personality promoted by Negritude and its decorous revolt against modernity in the name of primordial racial virtues.²⁰ Yet this studied exercise in "ancestralism"²¹ ultimately seemed to Fanon to be a circumvention of history and the imperative of freedom itself. There is nothing, writes Fanon, "specifically national" in Negritude's rhetoric of identity (DT, 145; WE, 211), nothing indicative of a particularity willed and achieved by dint of historical action in this cult of gratuitous racial commonalities and ancestral essences. To be sure, Fanon understood the "historical obligation" which led proponents of cultural autonomy all too often to "racialize their claims and to speak more of African culture than of national culture." Responsibility for this "racialization of thought," he writes, must in the first place be assigned to colonial racism, to which the idea of Negritude is but "the emotional if not the logical antithesis." Nevertheless, Fanon saw in this reactive pursuit of racialized identity "a blind alley" (DT, 146–147; WE, 212–214). A blind alley, he suggests, because it is a futile escape from time and an abjuration of that will to a determinate particularity which is the fruit of historical action. And indeed at the famous pan-racial gatherings of the period—Fanon's examples are the first and second congresses of the African Cultural Society in 1956 and 1959—specifically *national* preoccupations which were "fundamentally heterogeneous" soon asserted themselves. Fanon concludes that "Negritude . . . finds its first limitation in the phenomena which take account of the historical formation of human

beings [*l'historicisation des hommes*]" (DT, 148–149; WE, 215–216: RT). If the author of *Black Skin, White Masks* forswears the idea of "black truth" in the name of the unencumbered freedom of the judging subject, the author of *The Wretched of the Earth* repudiates the notion of "black culture" in favor of a political community's distinctive project of identity (PN, 205; BS, 228; DT, 146; WE, 212). For Fanon the theater of collective individuation is not an indeterminate essence and destiny of the race, or an ancestral way of being kept inviolate in the body and soul of a resilient peasantry; it is the national community.

A plausible vision of postcolonial autonomy must thus come to terms with the particulars and constraining circumstances of historical experience, with its defining locus and time. The locus is the national society wrung into existence from antecedent entities by imperial command and nationalist revenge. The time is the fateful meeting of a deformed modernity and a disfigured traditional world faced with the enormous challenge of mutual regeneration. Such an appreciation of the ordinances of political space and time rules out a blind and headlong embrace of the inherited artifacts and institutions of colonial modernity, such as they are. But it also rules out a xenophobic resistance to modernity or an atavistic project of a return to primal origins. The only return imaginable, for Fanon, is a return to "the question of humanity," a question to which European modernity was a violent, flawed, yet "prodigious" response (DT, 231–232; WE, 314–315; RT). This seems to me to be the message of the famous conclusion to *The Wretched of the Earth*. There, it is true, after the preceding chapters' portraits of the pathological social and mental structures engendered by colonialism, Fanon pronounces a final curse upon the European legacy. In what amounts to an apotropaic incantation, he declares: "Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of humanity, yet murder human beings everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their streets, in all the corners of the globe." Inveighing against the temptation to follow the "European model," he reminds us of the colossal toll of violence wreaked by that model in the name of a developmentalist humanism: "When I search for humanity in the technique and style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of humanity, and an avalanche of murders" (DT, 229–230; WE, 311–312). It is indeed utterances such as these which have earned the book's conclusion the reputation of being an

unmistakable expression of Fanon's "loathing for Europe, its values and history."²²

Yet before the curtain falls on this scene of imprecations, Fanon will let it be known that if a Faustian urge to catch up with the West is a fatal error, is indeed condemned to end up with an "altogether obscene caricature," there is also "no question of a return to Nature" (DT, 232; WE, 314-315). And indeed the opening stanzas of this epilogue—for they are nothing less than summational poetic invocations—are truly Nietzschean in their joyful wisdom *and* troubled admonition. They exult in the dawn of the "new day" heralded by the end of the captivity in which the age of Europe has held the human project. But they also warn against the oppressive persistence or return of the master's authority in the shape of extraverted discourses and reactive programs. Like the "shadow" of God which, according to Nietzsche, continues to haunt the languages of metaphysics, science, and life long after the official death of God,²³ the idioms of postcolonial thought and action are in danger, on Fanon's clinical view, of remaining in thrall to the eyes of the West. Obsessional discourses, they could still be burdened, whether in the mode of affirmation or that of dissension, with the need for justification before the court of Western achievement—the need to demonstrate equivalence with the West or difference from it. Fanon proposes something entirely different: "We must leave our dreams and abandon our old beliefs and friendships from the time before life began. Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry" (DT, 229; WE, 311). A truly new day is heralded by dropping the West both as an object of "nauseating mimicry" and as the audience for "sterile litanies." Life begins when we do away with the manifest Eurocentricity of the Westernizer but also with the latent and complicit Eurocentricity of the melodramatist of difference.

What, then, is to be done if obsequious mimicry and neurotic atavism are equally outlawed? The awesome task Fanon enjoins upon postcolonial humanity in their particular national communities is nothing less than wresting from the West monopolistic stewardship of the "human condition" in its concrete instance as the modern project. Fanon makes it clear that this cannot mean a completion of the unfinished tasks of the Western version of modernity.²⁴ In light of its history of violence, a consummation of that version can spell only the annihilation of the African world. No, what Fanon has in

mind is a radical reordering of the ends and instruments of a now irreversible modernity in the service of a "new humanism": "The human condition, plans for human beings, and collaboration between human beings in those tasks which enhance the wholeness of the human being are new problems which demand true inventions . . . If we want humanity to advance a step further, if we want to bring it up to a level different from that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries" (DT, 230–232; WE, 312–315; RT). A necessary condition for the radical transvaluation of the ends and instruments of modernity is the critical dialogue of inherited and nascent life-worlds. Fanon holds out the possibility that the body of "intellectual and technical capital" which the national bourgeoisie had "snatched" from imperial institutions of knowledge will, in the hands of the dissident intelligentsia, be the meeting place for this "conversation of discovery."²⁵ But what, when all is said and done, does this regenerative dialogue entail, if not the appropriation of a historical legacy not of our own choosing?

"Appropriation": as we shall presently see, this is the expression that Fanon employs in an exemplary account of what it would mean for the postcolonial citizen to relate freely to the building of an instrumental device, a bridge. Fanon demands that the citizen "*s'approprié le pont*," "make the bridge his own" (DT, 136; WE, 201; RT). That concrete instance of the practice of appropriation, I take it, encapsulates Fanon's understanding of the dialectic of necessity and freedom in the postcolonial condition. For if we recall with Fanon the etymological significance of the word, then "appropriation" is not at all the nefarious activity it has become in current usage and cultural politics, but rather takes on the character of an irreproachable answer on the part of postcolonial citizens to what may be called the problem of their lived historical ontology: namely, how is an autonomous relationship to the consequences of an invasive modernity possible? Appropriation, on this view, would be the activity of coming into one's own when there is no primal self to return to, no inviolate native essences to recapture; consequently, the enterprise of transforming into one's own tradition of possibilities an imposed order of practices and thereby overcoming their violence.²⁶ This is the project for which Fanon enlists the offices of the dissident intelligentsia. Nothing could thus be more erroneous than Jock McCulloch's claim that it is "with the greatest reluctance" that Fanon turns to these dissidents for leadership.²⁷ To the contrary, Fanon's evocation

of the prospects of appropriation and of the role of revolutionary intellectuals in its concrete instances is, if anything, suffused with the proverbial excesses of dialectical optimism. In the following section I reenact two such concrete instances of appropriation in Fanon's texts.

ALLEGORIES OF APPROPRIATION

The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

—AUDRE LORDE, *Sister Outsider*

Only the West assumes that modernity and Westernization must be synonymous.

—ROLAND WRIGHT, *Stolen Continents*

A Dying Colonialism is a visionary narrative of the “radical mutations” that bring into being a free postcolonial subject. Of the paradigmatic transformations it dramatizes, two concern the process by which the impositions of colonial modernity—in the form of the artifacts of instrumental reason and the institutions of communicative action—are salvaged from their original violence, made available for the constitution of an autonomous social being and citizen, and thereby compelled to undergo nothing less than “a dialectical transcendence [*un dépassement dialectique*]” (SR, 74; DC, 90). Specifically, these case histories concern the radical changes which Fanon discerns in the nascent citizen's attitudes to the medical science and language of the colonizer, described in “Medicine and Colonialism” and “This Is the Voice of Algeria.” In both essays Fanon criticizes reductionist ethnocultural interpretations of the experience of modernity in non-Western societies, interpretations which abstract from the power relations that inhere in instrumental and communicative practices. It is these power relations and not some antecedent or perennial features of the “native personality” which account for resistances or receptivity to modern practices and contrivances. The poverty of ethnosociology is revealed by the “radical transformations that have occurred,” according to Fanon, in attitudes to modern techniques and modes of action consequent upon the war of national liberation in Algeria (SR, 53, 114; DC, 71, 127).

What is called for, then, is an analysis of attitudes to modern

science and practices that is “constantly referred back to the colonial framework” (SR, 115; DC, 127). For, Fanon argues, beyond the generic crisis of assimilating modern medical science and technology, and beyond the universal patterns of behavior which the crisis of modernization provokes, the specific colonial auspices of technological modernization are responsible for a specific lack of rational receptivity, and may be said to engender the *underdevelopment of scientific culture*. The behavior of the colonized is torn between a partial receptivity which is transformed by the colonizer “into a justification of the occupation,” “a confession of congenital impotence” on the part of the colonized; and a “hard, undifferentiated, categorical” refusal which confirms the image of the “native’s” primitivism and fatalism (SR, 108; DC, 122).

In the case of the encounter with modern medicine, for example, the mistrust of European doctors is a function of the position they occupy in society as colonizers. The doctor is as much a figure of repressive and exclusionary power as the engineer, the schoolteacher, the policeman, and the rural constable—all of them perceived “through the haze of an almost organic confusion” (SR, 107; DC, 121). From the first consultation to treatment and prescription of medicines, the doctor inspires extraordinary fear and anxiety. Fanon writes that “this absence of enlightened behaviour reveals the colonized person’s mistrust of the colonizing technician. The technician’s words are always understood in a pejorative way. *The truth objectively expressed is constantly vitiated by the lie of the colonial situation*” (SR, 115; DC, 128; my emphasis: RT). “The lie of the colonial situation” is the discourse of radical antinomy, the antidialectic of a world founded on an absolute “social dichotomy” (SR, 53; DC, 71). In such a world the possibility of a scientific culture, the possibility of a free participation in an achieved community of knowledge is “vitiating.” Indeed, the impossibility of a common and uncoerced assent to an objective truth in scientific statements and technical practices expresses the general “impossibility of finding a meeting ground in any colonial situation,” the impossibility of submission on the part of the colonizer and the colonized to “a single value”: consensus on truth and the “colonial constellation” are mutually exclusive (SR, 111–113; DC, 125–126).

Let us note that Fanon here sketches a genealogy of cognitive-instrumental structures as being constitutively and perversely imbricated in power relations, but without invoking the postmodernist

anathema against the ideal of a free commonwealth of truth. A detective of the politics of truth, suspicious as he is of Western reason, Fanon cannot quite bring himself to abandon the promise of a truth that is "objectively" ascertainable. Fanon goes so far as to fault not the Enlightenment for its tyrannical rationalism or its oppressive and specious universalisms, but putative native users of modern instrumental techniques for the "absence of enlightened behaviour" on their part. True, Fanon does not exactly succumb to victim bashing; he places the blame for the dread the doctor inspires squarely upon the colonial auspices of the encounter with medical science. But he regrets—and he must if his critique is to be coherent—the radical perversion of cognitive-instrumental (and, as we will presently see, communicative) rationality by apartheid social relations and political arrangements.

And if, despite his knowledge of colonial violence, Fanon holds on to the idea of universalizable truth, he is even less drawn to the premodernist temptation of a return to "tradition." For should not the repressive political foundations of the encounter with modern techniques and their avatars send the colonized back to traditional practices? But such a premodernist nativist retreat, says Fanon, would be quite futile, for the simple reason that there is no space made safe from colonial impositions. A violated and traumatized traditional world and a violent but uneven modernity are two sides of the same colonial history: "Colonial domination distorts the very relations that the colonized maintains with his own culture. In a great number of cases, the practice of tradition is a disturbed practice, the colonized being unable to completely reject modern discoveries and the arsenal of disease-fighting weapons possessed by the hospitals, the ambulances, the nurses" (SR, 118; DC, 130: RT). Suspended between an invasive modernity and a distorted tradition, the colonized subject is caught in an "infernal, because tragic, labyrinth" (SR, 113; DC, 126: RT): unable to resist the power of modern medical science, yet compelled by "political, psychological, social reasons" to give traditional medicine its due; torn between loyalty to tradition at the risk of health, and acceptance of modern practice at the risk of "admitting, to a limited extent perhaps but nonetheless unequivocally, the validity of the Western technique" (SR, 118; DC, 131: RT).

From this conundrum not even the participation of the native medical technician can free the colonized.

There is a manifest ambivalence of the colonized group with respect to any member who acquires a technique or the manners of the conqueror. For the group, in fact, the native technician is living proof that any one of its members is capable of being an engineer, a lawyer or a doctor. But there is at the same time, in the background, the awareness of a sudden divergence between the homogeneous group, enclosed within itself, and this native technician who has escaped beyond the specific psychological or emotional categories of the people. The native doctor is a Europeanized, Westernized doctor, and in certain circumstances he is considered as no longer being a part of the dominated society. He is tacitly rejected into the camp of the oppressors, into the opposing camp. It is not by accident that in certain colonies the educated native is referred to as "having acquired the habits of a master." For many of the colonized, the native doctor is compared to the native police, to the *caid*, to the notable. The colonized is both proud of the success of his *race* and at the same time looks upon this technician with disapproval. The native doctor's behaviour with respect to the traditional medicine of his country is for a long time characterized by a considerable aggressiveness. The native doctor feels himself psychologically compelled to demonstrate firmly his new admission to a rational universe. This accounts for the abrupt way in which he rejects the magic practices of his people. Given the ambivalence of the colonized with respect to the native doctor and the ambivalence of the native doctor before certain features of his culture, the encounter of doctor and patient inevitably proves difficult. (SR, 119-120; DC, 131-132)

The ambiguous status of the native doctor is indeed a metaphor for "the drama of the colonized intellectuals *before* the fight for liberation." Far from delivering a blanket indictment of the intelligentsia, Fanon offers a political explanation of their predicament and sees the possibility of their role as the mediators of an authentic and nonrepressive assimilation of scientific culture and modern thought in the service of autonomous national development. But such a process of appropriation must occur, Fanon insists, in the course of the revolution itself and as part of the program of political education, one in which a borrowed enlightenment will learn to renounce its hyperrationalist violence and in which a disfigured universe of tradition will come to withdraw its absolute mistrust of mediators of

modernity. What will occasion this "revolutionary pedagogy" (SR, 82; DC, 97)?

Before the war of liberation, Fanon writes, medical science and concern for one's health were always "proposed or imposed by the occupying power." Now in a desperate effort to kill the revolution, the colonial authorities withdraw these services, impose sanctions against treating wounded soldiers of the liberation army, and place embargoes on various essential medications. After their coercive imposition upon the colonized, medical science and services are now arbitrarily withdrawn: "Just when the Algerian people decided no longer to wait for others to treat them, colonialism prohibited the sale of medications and surgical instruments. Just when the Algerian was set to live and take care of himself, the occupying power doomed him to a horrible agony" (SR, 129; DC, 139-140). The consequent problem of public health necessitated the recruitment of medical students, nurses, and doctors into the revolutionary cells, thereby integrating the technical administration of medical services into the politics of the revolution and the nascent postcolonial culture. Fanon describes the ensuing reciprocity between the education in the use of modern techniques and the generation of solidarity:

Meetings were organized among political leaders and health technicians. After a short time, people's delegates assigned to handle public health problems came and joined each cell. All questions were dealt with in a remarkable spirit of revolutionary solidarity. There was no paternalism; there was no timidity. On the contrary, a concerted effort was made to achieve the health plan that had been worked out. The health technician did not launch a "psychological approach program for the purpose of winning over the underdeveloped population." The problem was, under the direction of the national authority, to supervise the people's health, to protect the lives of our women, of our children, of our combatants . . . The Algerian doctor, the native doctor who, as we have seen, was looked upon before the national combat as an ambassador of the occupier, was reintegrated into the group. Sleeping on the ground with the men and women of the *mechtas*, living the drama of the people, the Algerian doctor became a part of the Algerian body. There was no longer that reticence, so constant during the period of unchallenged oppression. He was no longer "the" doctor, but "our" doctor, "our" technician. The people henceforth demanded

and practiced a technique stripped of its foreign characteristics. (SR, 131-132; DC, 141-142)

It is no doubt possible to wince a little at the empirical and enduring truth of this account of the return of the prodigal child into the womb of the community, there to join in the disalienation of science. Read, however, as a *performative*, it remains in these destitute times a compelling vision of the patriation and democratic transformation of scientific technology into local knowledge. Yet Fanon's visionary narrative does not end here. A truly liberating education in the experience of modernity cannot culminate, Fanon suggests to us, with the homecoming of its native avatars. A further advance on that road—the road “toward a new humanism”—is made possible by the collaboration of the European doctor or pharmacist who would offer clandestine aid and medication to the Algerian combatants. In the action of these apostates, Fanon discerns a phenomenon unknown or “often nonexistent” in the colonial context: “*science depoliticised*, science placed at the service of the human being” (SR, 130; DC, 140). In the colonial context, in a racist world order, science as an activity of instrumental reason is political, to the degree that its development and underdevelopment, its application and withdrawal, are functions of the dominant power's particular knowledge and interests. It was not for nothing—it was not simply because of the influence of surrealism—that Aimé Césaire called reason “the whip's corolla.”²⁸ Under these circumstances, the collaboration of the European medical scientist or technician in liberating and saving the lives of the wretched of the earth signals the advent of revolutionary science, a new world order of rationality as a truly universal productive force of humanity. For postcolonial consciousness, Fanon's vision of transracial scientific knowledge and practice holds out a challenging promise: namely, that the “racialization of thought”—which, he feared, would become an obstinate legacy of colonialism, bequeathing all manner of separatist world views and race-intoxicated knowledge projects—will lose something of its spell.

Ultimately, then, Fanon's visionary narrative holds out the promise that the mythification of the world wrought by white reason in the service of domination will be overcome by living evidences of compassionate rationality in the service of national liberation and in the interests of the pacification of postcolonial existence. In the event of appropriation, in the disclosure of its political conditions of possibil-

ity, the phantoms of white mythology—racist and reductive notions of the innate “psychology of the native” held to be constitutionally inimical to the procedures of rational thought—are undermined: “Once the body of the nation begins to live again in a coherent and dynamic way, everything becomes possible. The notions about ‘native psychology’ or of the ‘basic personality’ are shown to be vain. The people who take their destiny into their own hands assimilate the most modern forms of technology at an extraordinary rate” (SR, 135; DC, 144–145). The necessary condition for this assimilation of world-historical habits of rationality is the postcolonial citizen’s homecoming.

An even more dramatic instance of the project of appropriation, one in which the structures of instrumental reason and the operations of communicative action are inextricably intertwined, is Fanon’s account, in “This Is the Voice of Algeria,” of the metamorphosis of language use. There can hardly be a more compelling refutation of the idea of Fanon’s cultural xenophobia than the fact that the man who saw the function of the colonizer’s language to be symbolic of colonial coercion and alienation would conceive of the possibility of converting this same language to the service of a radically new “world of perception,” a new universe of expression and action.

It may be recalled that the opening chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks* presented a critical account of the “problem of language” in the colonial world: “Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural values. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle” (PN, 34; BS, 18; RT). Now, there is more to this critical view than a nativist complaint about the alienation of language use and cultural practices, a nativist solicitude for what Fanon elsewhere calls the “reciprocal relativism of different cultures” (RA, 45; AR, 44). More crucial for Fanon is the nature of the communicative relations which the authority of the dominant language establishes between the colonizers and the colonized, the experience of language which the colonized in consequence undergo. In this experience of language,

Fanon sees a peculiar and indeed perverse mode of the human relation to the world and of the drama of existence-for-others. In so doing Fanon takes up, in his own idiosyncratic way, the idea of the emblematic status of "our relation to language" that has, since Heidegger, become a principal preoccupation of social thought. In the words of Heidegger: "If it is true that man finds the proper abode of his existence in language—whether he is aware of it or not—then an experience we undergo with language will touch the innermost nexus of our existence."²⁹ More precisely, Fanon's account of the "pathology of language"³⁰ and communicative action as a paradigm case of the colonial condition prefigures the concerns of one version of post-Heideggerian thought: the "linguistic turn" in social philosophy associated with the work of Jürgen Habermas.³¹

Deriving yet departing from the foundationalist preoccupations of these discourses on language—the existential ontology of Heidegger (and Sartre), the formal pragmatics of Habermas—Fanon's theory would consider language as a preeminent symbol of the political problem of freedom and coercion, community and its derangement. In the experience of language which the colonized undergo, one finds an emblem of "the colonial situation as a whole," a measure of their "human status in the world" (SR, 51; DC, 69). The idea that the colonized subject's "human status in the world" is disclosed by the experience of language has foundationalist resonances to the extent that it is framed by a normative view of the interactive and cognitive functions of linguistic competence.³² According to that normative view, adumbrated in the opening paragraphs of "Le Noir et le langage" ("The Black Person and Language"), "to speak is to exist absolutely for the other" in a relation of fateful reciprocity. To speak is also "to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization." Fanon suggests here a relationship of mutual dependence between the constraints of an antecedent structure and the expressive freedom of the speaking subject, such that "the person who possesses a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language . . . Mastery of language affords remarkable power" (PN, 33–34; BS, 17–18: RT). Fanon here cites with approval Paul Valéry's hyperbole to the effect that language is "the god gone astray in the flesh." But he might have found nothing wrong with Habermas'

more austere characterization of language: "Through its structure, autonomy and responsibility are posited for us."³³

According to Fanon, the colonial encounter institutes modes of the cognitive and interactive functions of language that are a far cry from their transcendental possibilities. First, Fanon suggests that in the colonial version of the cognitive function of language, the mutual dependence of a language world and a speaking subject who enjoys expressive autonomy and responsibility is shattered. In place of this relation of reciprocity, the colonizer's language here assumes a constitutive authority that mirrors the status of imperial subjectivity as a kind of demiurgic power acting on inert and formless matter. Speaking of colonial Algeria, Fanon says that the project of a "French Algeria," the policy of "making the occupier's language the sole practical means of communication" available to Algeria's ethnic communities, reflected "on the level of language the very doctrine of colonialism"—to wit, that "it is the intervention of the foreign nation that puts order into the original anarchy of the colonized country. Under these conditions, the French language, the language of the occupier, was given the role of *Logos*, with *ontological implications within Algerian society*" (SR, 76; DC, 91; my emphasis). The hubris which Heidegger discerned in the soul of modern Western subjectivity would seem to have attained its unbridled reign in the speech of the colonizer.³⁴ The transcendent autonomy of a world—"a separate earth," in the words of Soyinka³⁵—is here violated, just as the native subject is disenfranchised of his or her expressive freedom and constitutive responsibility for that world.

Correlatively, the second function of language, the interactive relationship between speaking subjects, expresses the principle of "reciprocal exclusivity" which, according to "Concerning Violence," governs the colonizer-colonized relation. If, as Fanon (following Sartre) holds, the problem of language is coextensive with the problem of "being-for-another" (PN, 33; BS, 17),³⁶ then the relative status of self and Other will be paradigmatic of the communicative rules, roles, and relations that obtain between them. In a pun on Sartre, Fanon says of the relative status of self and Other in Algeria before decolonization: "Before the rebellion, there was the truth of the colonizer and the nothingness of the colonized" (SR, 61).³⁷ Accordingly, Fanon characterizes this communicative pattern as "paternalistic understanding" (PN, 46; BS, 33), "narcissistic monologue" (DT,

14; WE, 46), or "the monologue of the colonial situation" (SR, 80; DC, 95). This would seem to be a communicative pattern furthest removed from Habermas' "ideal speech situation." Here, as Baudrillard would put it, "Power consists in the monopoly of the spoken word; the spoken word (decision, responsibility) is no longer exchanged."³⁸

Clearly, then, Fanon's characterization of what may be called the *colonial speech situation* incorporates and yet goes beyond the critique of cultural imperialism, the nationalist protest against the "unilaterally decreed normative value of certain cultures" (RA, 33; AR, 31). Fanon is concerned more profoundly with what he describes as the "ontological implications" of the colonial experience of language: the subject-object relationship established, first, between the speech act of the colonizer and the indigenous world; and, consequently, between the colonizer and the colonized in their communicative roles. When Fanon says in "Concerning Violence" that decolonization "changes being in a fundamental manner," he has in mind the prospect of a radical reversal in the ontological consequences of the colonial encounter such as those engendered by the experience of language (DT, 6; WE, 36: RT).

Is this model of a pure colonial economy of language and being as a subject-object relation altered in Fanon's eyes by the strategic function typically performed by those relatives of the national bourgeoisie who are in the business of language—the function of *interpreters* occupied by the native intelligentsia? No, because in the colonial context the interpreter's function amounts, according to Fanon, to little more than "conveying the master's orders to their fellows" (PN, 34; BS, 18–19). The interpreters' function in this sense simply mirrors at the level of communicative action the paradigmatic role of the national bourgeoisie in economic transactions: rather than nurturing an indigenous community of meaning, the interpreters are responsible for circulating imperial signs. That is why Fanon says that the "famous dialogue" between the colonizers and the native intelligentsia is in fact a counterfeit dialogue (DT, 12; WE, 44). But if the primary communicative relation of the native intelligentsia to the colonizers is that of civil servants, comprador agents in the command economy of *logos*, truth, and meaning, their secondary relation to their fellow colonized people is all the more authoritarian and repressive. No wonder that, beneficiary of a borrowed hierarchy, half

slave half master, the native intellectual overcompensates for his ambiguous position by demanding of his compatriots, in the manner typical of the one who has freshly returned from the metropole, that "the word [be] immediately given" to him (PN, 39; BS, 24). Such is the structural cause, Fanon suggests, for the native intellectual's historical "inaptitude to engage in dialogue," his inability to "make himself inessential" in the presence of the other, his penchant for silencing the voice of the people through the power granted by the acquisition of alien linguistic competence. By no stretch of the dialectical imagination can it be said of the colonial experience of language and communicative action that it is "a school for democracy."³⁹

Or can it? Are the primary and secondary structures of the colonial experience of language open to a dialectical transformation? This is the daring possibility which Fanon holds out in "This Is the Voice of Algeria." Recall that, as in the case of medical science, what from Fanon's humanist perspective vitiates the colonizer's language from serving the cultivation of a commonwealth of the useful, the true, and the good, is not the mere fact of its foreign origin. A nationalist or an Afrocentric cultural politics might take care of *that* business by making, say, Swahili the official language the day after independence. No, the principal problem for Fanon is the inherent contradiction of language (and instrumental reason) in the colonial context: the claim, unwarranted in the colonial context yet implicit in its language game, to the possibility of an objective truth and a common good in the face of a manifest antinomy, in the face of the absolute "social dichotomy" that divides and separates the colonizer and the colonized as knowing, speaking, judging, and acting subjects. As we shall see presently, it is the communicative relations expressing this antinomy which impart to the artifacts of the European language, such as Francophone radio in colonial Algeria, "their character of extraneousness" (SR, 73; DC, 89). Should these communicative relations and the antinomy upon which they are parasitic be radically transformed, it might become possible to wrest the productive resources of the Word from alienating and repressive usages. Fanon sees such a possibility, such a revolution, in the status of the colonizer's "signs" and the nascent postcolonial subject's relation to them, heralded by a signal event: the free appropriation of the French language, which only yesterday in the shape of *Radio-Alger* embod-

ied the settlers' presence and prohibitions, by *La voix de l'Algérie*, the vehicle of the National Liberation Front and the harbinger of the postcolonial future.

What Fanon stresses in this extraordinary act of visionary interpretation is the politics of cultural action and reaction, including the political character of the conditions for retrieving the "intellectual and technical capital" of the revolutionary intelligentsia for the appropriation of modernity. In so doing, Fanon repudiates sociological and ethnological explanations of attitudes to modern artifacts. The inquiries generated by these approaches, he tells us, do not advance beyond "the level of lived experience" and are thus incapable of "obtaining a rational account of attitudes and choices" regarding language and its material texts such as the radio. More precisely, these approaches are incapable of explaining the attitude of Algerians toward the radio before the war of national liberation, an attitude not indeed of organized resistance but of "a dull absence of interest in that piece of French presence" (SR, 55; DC, 72). In effect, Fanon adumbrates a critical program that, following and revising Habermas, might be described as a *political pragmatics of the sign*. The mission of such a political pragmatics is fourfold.

First, it begins by sketching the elementary and general possibilities of the human subject's relations with a signifying object, in the spirit of an existential phenomenology of perception and expression: "As an instrumental technique in the limited sense, the radio receiving set develops the sensorial, intellectual and muscular powers of the human being in a given society." It then draws a distinction between these general functions and their concrete conditions of existence in a colonized society:

The radio in occupied Algeria is a technique in the hands of the occupier which, within the framework of colonial domination, does not answer to any vital need of the "native." The radio, as a symbol of French presence, as a material representation of the colonial configuration, is characterized by an extremely important negative valence. The possible intensification and extension of sensorial and intellectual powers by the French radio are implicitly rejected or denied by the indigenous people. The technical instrument, the new scientific acquisitions, when they contain a sufficient charge to threaten a given feature of the indigenous society, are never perceived in themselves [*en soi*], in a calm neutrality. The technical

instrument is rooted in the colonial situation where, as we know, negative and positive coefficients always exists in a very accentuated way. (SR, 55; DC, 72-73; RT)

The first task of a political pragmatics, then, is to identify the specific historical conditions that render the potential virtues of the instrumental technique, the thing-in-itself (*en soi*) inaccessible. It thereby discloses and denounces repressive conditions of the encounter with technique, conditions responsible for the *underdevelopment of scientific culture*. But it does so without embracing a radical suspicion of instrumental reason that would discount the potential benefits of the "new scientific acquisitions."

The second and indeed decisive move of a political pragmatics is to show that the problem of instrumental action—the distortion of its potential excellences—is paradigmatic of a more fundamental problem of language and communicative action: "At another level, as a system of information, *as a bearer of language*, the radio may be apprehended within the colonial situation in a special way. Radiophonic technique, the press, and in a general way the systems, messages, sign transmitters, exist in colonial society in accordance with a well-defined statute. Algerian society, *the dominated society, never participates in this world of signs*" (SR, 55-56; DC, 73; my emphasis). The dominated society experiences this language world under the aspect of "a violent invasion": its characteristic vocabulary possesses an "inquisitorial character" and "highly alienating meanings" charged with delivering "an order, a threat, or an insult" (SR, 72-74; DC, 88-89). What vitiates access to the potential benefits of instrumental action, it turns out, is precisely this subjection of the colonized to alienated communicative relations. A second consequence of Fanon's political pragmatics is thus to challenge the context-innocent rationalism of formal pragmatics, a rationalism which, according to Habermas' preemptive self-critique, "promotes the fiction that Socratic dialogue is possible everywhere and at any time."⁴⁰ But it offers this contextualist challenge without abandoning the promise and ideal of autonomy and responsibility that inhere in language use.⁴¹

The third concern of Fanon's political pragmatics is to refute the cultural relativism which informs sociological and ethnopsychological accounts of the experience of modernity in "non-Western" societies. And it refutes this cultural relativism for the same reason that

it challenges the transcendental universalism of formal pragmatics: namely, in order to ascertain the concrete—and alterable—conditions that shape “attitudes and choices” in relation to language, its material objectifications and its semiotic products. Thus, Fanon rejects explanations of the Algerians’ initial refusal to acquire the radio which reduce their attitude to a traditionalist resistance. He finds no evidence of “counter-acculturation” as a cause of this refusal. To be sure, Fanon does not entirely discount the offense caused to patriarchal Algerian sensibilities by the morally permissive tone of French radio entertainment programs. But he clearly considers this superficial as the principal explanation for the Algerians’ attitude; just as he regards as “artificial” and fraught with “errors” solutions to the alleged problem of moral aversions dictated by this ethnoculturalist “sociological explanation”—solutions such as “the staggering of broadcasts addressed to the family as a whole, to male groups, to female groups, etc.” (SR, 52–53; DC, 70–71). Cultural relativism, Fanon suggests, is ideological because it obscures the culpable power relations which thwart the autonomy and responsibility of social agents in their communicative and instrumental transactions. Cultural relativism thereby disallows the critique of domination; but it also discounts the possibility of what Fanon calls “radical transformations in this domain” (*ibid.*).⁴²

And this brings us to the fourth and culminating function of Fanon’s political pragmatics. By being context-sensitive without becoming cultural-relativist and ethically agnostic, by showing that language and the “world of signs” may subserve determinate relations of domination but without jettisoning the ideal of communicative autonomy and responsibility, Fanon’s critical theory is able to envisage an unsuspected possibility: the original appropriation by postcolonial humanity of a legacy which an invasive modernity has bequeathed. It is a vision, then, wise in the ways of the master’s Word but unwilling to give those ways the last word. It is the vision which informs Fanon’s account of the changed attitude of Algerians to the radio and the French language upon the outbreak of the war of national liberation.

What precipitated this change was the need for Algerians to control their own sources of information free from the censored and distorted news concerning the course of the revolution that was being offered by the colonial radio and press. The immediate occasion of the change in attitudes was thus a crisis of knowledge on the part

of a "community in action," its imperative need "to oppose the enemy news with [its] own news," and thereby come to participate in a new and rival "world of truth" (SR, 58-59; DC, 75-76). The refusal of the colonizer's power and knowledge, the call of "national action," will now mandate the acquisition of the radio, a material emblem of that very power, that very knowledge. It is as if the colonized can regain mastery of their self-knowledge, indeed can become an epistemic community of autonomous citizens, only by hearing and disseminating "their own news" [*ses propres informations*] through a device owned by the colonizer. It is as if a renascent people can most truly come into their own by virtue of robbing the master of exclusive proprietorship of the work of his Word. Is it too fanciful to see in this act of appropriation as related by Fanon the first skirmishes of a revolt against possessive subjectivity in the production relations of the modern world-system of signs?

We are led to this suggestion by Fanon's account of how the radio became particularly necessary at a critical moment in the movement of national liberation. After the boycott of local European newspapers in 1955, the radio, he reports, became "the sole means of obtaining news from non-French sources." Henceforth the possibility of devoting the same technical instrument to differing political ends became evident. To purchase the radio meant not the adoption of a neutral modern technique, but "the only means of entering into communication with the Revolution, of living with it." Or rather, Fanon writes, the autonomous ends to which the adopted artifact is to minister enable the Algerians "to skip a stage and to arrive straightaway at the most modern forms of news-communication" (SR, 66-67, DC, 82-83). Fanon here invokes the famous Trotskyist trope of telescoping historical stages as the fate of societies that would undo the captive development or enforced lassitude of the past. But Fanon also suggests that a necessary condition for joining the time of modernity at this accelerated pace in an authentic manner is that the material and symbolic objects of modernity be divested of their past, their received modes of being. This will mean that the modern artifact be freed of its status as an external constraint, that it lose "its identity as an enemy object" or "a part of the occupier's arsenal of cultural oppression," and that novel and untried possibilities be wrested from it. Fanon calls this event of transfiguration—of the linguistic object as instrumental technique no less than of the human subject as nascent citizen—"the concerted progression and

dialectic of new national necessities" (SR, 67–68; DC, 84: RT). We might redescribe this as the necessary project of gathering imposed and inherited symbolic forms into a willed context of meaning and action within a radically new world order of signs.

And if the radio is to be pressed into the service of this founding act, if it can be made to shed its past identity as alien and alienating object, then why not the language of which the radio is but a material form? Before 1954, according to Fanon, the nationalist response to the disparagement of Arabic by the French colonialist was a blanket refusal to use the French language: "The Arabic language was the most effective means that the *nation's being* had of unveiling itself." Then, being receptive to French, like being receptive to the radio, meant "giving asylum to the occupier's words; it meant allowing the colonizer's language to filter into the very heart of the house, the last of the supreme bastions of the national spirit." But now a people in revolt rediscovers the French language, just as it does the radio, "as a basis for a possible communication," communication among the nation's different parts. Arabic loses its sacrosanct status and French its "negative connotations," once it is subordinated to the needs of national existence by the *Voice of Fighting Algeria* (SR, 77; DC, 92). The symbols of a violent modernity as language and technology—as the language of technology—are in Fanon's vision rid of their "historical meanings": "The broadcasting in French of the program of *Fighting Algeria* was to liberate the enemy language of its historical meanings. The same message transmitted in three different languages unified experience and gave it a universal dimension. The French language lost its accursed character, revealing itself to be capable also of transmitting, for the benefit of the nation, the message of truth that the latter awaited" (SR, 74; DC, 89: RT).

That the colonial presence and the postcolonial future can both find voice in French demonstrates, according to Fanon, the relativity of the colonizer's "signs": caught in a "circuit of complicity," he writes, "two orders of reality objectify themselves through the mediation of a single linguistic system" (SR, 76; DC, 89).⁴³ It is indeed as if the emergent nation's unifying discourse, as if the nation as a principle of integration, manifests itself through "multiple orders of signification" (SR, 77; DC, 92: RT). What matters for Fanon's postcolonial citizenry is not the origin of a language or the racial identity of its native speakers, but that they come to experience this language, more precisely this "world of signs," as answering to "an autono-

mous and internal movement" of demands and decisions (SR, 68; DC, 84; RT). Fanon argues that it is this exercise of internal autonomy which heals the "psychopathology" of language and symbolic action with respect to alien "signs," a psychopathology exemplified by the phobic reaction which French *sentences* used to induce in Algerian ears (SR, 73–74; DC, 89–90). Are we to presume, then, that the *sine qua non* of linguistic competence is the participation of the speaking subject in a freely constituted linguistic community? Fanon appears to think so. For he discerns in the new attitude of the Algerian toward the French language "not the emergence of an ambivalence, but rather a mutation, a radical change of valence, not a balancing act but a dialectical transcendence"—a transcendence of the prohibitions and antinomies that inhabit the symbolic space of the colonial world (SR, 74; DC, 90; RT). And he suggests that such a "dialectical transcendence" is signaled by what is in effect the founding act of an autonomous linguistic and political community: namely, its decision "to tell a story about itself and to make itself heard" (SR, 78; DC, 93; RT).

This is of course a radically activist, even agonistic, conception of the postcolonial subject's openness to the liberating possibilities of an imposed inheritance, the postcolonial subject's refashioned experience of language and symbolic objects. It has in it none of that passive receptivity which characterizes, say, Senghor's thankful genuflection before the numinous force of the French language and things French. Nor does it have for its envisioned outcome the final goal of all vulgar dialectics: *synthesis*, the highest ambition of that fleeting and decorous "moment of negativity" which is bourgeois cultural nationalism. Indeed, so anxious is Fanon to capture the sense of new beginnings, the sense of an inventive relation to history, that he resorts to hyperbole in describing the event of appropriation. With the *Voice of Algeria* as exemplar, Fanon calls what is in truth a recasting of received materials and forms nothing less than a *creatio ex nihilo*: the *Voice of Algeria*, he says, was "created out of nothing [*créée de rien*]" (SR, 81; DC, 96). Let us forgive Fanon the poetic excess which leads him to evoke in this manner the permanent revolution required of postcolonial humanity in order to free the institutions of material and symbolic production of their repressive ancestry.

"The *Speech* of the nation, the *Word* of the nation," materialized in the radio, as the uncaused cause which "shapes the world while

at the same time renewing it" (SR, 81; DC, 95): we may indeed be prepared to forgive Fanon the will to origination that finds voice in these breathtaking utterances. But we might not without further probing be equally charitable concerning the idiom in which Fanon describes the relation between this blessedly self-generated mortal god—the Word incarnate, as it were—and the postcolonial citizen. The sentence that describes the *Voice of Algeria* as being "created out of nothing" ends with the pronouncement that "it brought the nation into existence and endowed every citizen with a new status, *and told him so explicitly*" (the emphasis is Fanon's). Now, how is this vocabulary of secular creationism consonant with the principle of self-determination at the heart of what I have called Fanon's political pragmatics? How does it differ from the subject-object relation he discerned in the ontology of colonial discourse and the communicative practices it authorizes? Are the emancipatory credentials of Fanon's speech, the very credibility of his critical project, not seriously compromised by such utterances? Fanon claims that the event of appropriation is a profoundly and indeed inescapably democratic experience: "This community in action, renewed and freed of any psychological, emotional or legal subjection, is prepared today to assume modern and democratic responsibilities of exceptional moment" (SR, 172; DC, 179). This claim stands or falls on the evidence of the space which Fanon's allegories of appropriation and symbolic action allow to the founding powers of ordinary women and men. If we could discover in Fanon's vision archetypes of the people's constitutive authority, then perhaps our allergic reactions to the rhetoric of genesis might subside a little. Such a foundational vindication of the rights of the people would have to fulfill something like the categorial conditions which the early Marx considered to be characteristic of the discourse of democracy and its version of the problem of universals and particulars: namely, that in it the universal is generated out of the constituent assembly and acts of the "many ones." Fanon's text would truly be a narrative of liberation only if he described the gathering of the universal in such a manner that it is made manifest by the concerted actions of the citizenry.

We can indeed find precisely such an image of a new relation to language as a founding and normative experience of democratic citizenship in Fanon's account of the process of production of the "nation's speech." For the problem of democratic appropriation manifests itself in the first instance as a matter of the relation of the

postcolonial nation's unifying discourse to local understandings with respect to the fledgling identity of the national society. How to achieve a coherent narrative of the nation's being in the face of discrepant particular stories of its gestation? How to render a common meaning possible in the teeth of the fragmentation of political knowledge? How to convey even a shared understanding of the national revolution's prospects, given the distortions and resistances of a beleaguered colonialism? The mission of a counter-hegemonic institution of communicative action such as the *Voice of Algeria* is to create a narrative and political space in which the local freely bespeaks the national-universal. Tuning in to the *Voice of Algeria* is thus a politically symbolic act, that of the construction of public meaning in the face of distorted communication and organized polysemy: "The fragments and splinters of acts gleaned by the correspondent of a newspaper more or less attached to the colonial domination, or communicated by the opposing military authorities, lost their anarchic character and became organized into a national and Algerian political idea, assuming their place in an overall strategy of the reconquest of the people's sovereignty. The scattered acts fit into a vast epic" (SR, 68; DC, 84). Thanks to this interweaving of "scattered" stories, the *Voice of Algeria* became the embodiment of "national expression" (SR, 71; DC, 87).

But this birth of "national expression" would signal a reordered relation to language, would truly mean the end of the subject-object structure of colonial discourse, only if, according to this visionary allegory of appropriation, "every Algerian, for his part, broadcast and transmitted the new language." In effect, every citizen is to be made the agent and locus of the nation's unifying speech. For the defining "mode of existence of this voice," writes Fanon, consists in the fact that its universality is enabled by the action of the particulars, the "discrete pieces" (SR, 71-72; DC, 87: RT). Now, the radical democratic commitments of this account of the speaking and acting subject do not lead Fanon to embrace a populist or individualist notion of unmediated access to truth on the part of the isolate and self-sufficient person. Fanon acknowledges the decisive importance of the *interpreter* in the generation of narrative practices by means of which a postcolonial citizenry comes into its own. The gathering of the "nation's words," he tells us, occurs by virtue of "the mediation of the privileged interpreter" [*par le truchement de l'interprète privilégié*] (SR, 69-70; DC, 85: RT). To put it another way: the

postcolonial subject's education in communicative responsibility and autonomy is to be enabled by the work of that figure of mediation we may call the *modern griot*. No longer "the organic bearer of the collective memory" as was his premodern ancestor,⁴⁴ the modern griot would, like his Gramscian precursor, the "modern prince," be the harbinger of a new culture of knowledge and action yet to be planted and harvested. Again, like the Gramscian archetype, the modern griot is for Fanon the "incarnated voice" of popular national requirements rather than the civil servant of the ruling class. Can it be that *this* griot will shepherd the writing and dissemination of the nation's "vast epic" in a manner radically free from the ancestral complicity of the griot's craft and epic knowledge in "systems of power and domination."⁴⁵ What is Fanon's way of grounding the authority of the modern griot on radical democratic foundations in the event of appropriation?

In an extraordinary act of the political imagination, Fanon describes instances of men and women listening to news of Algerian fighters' confrontation with French troops, painfully endeavoring to extract coherent sense out of faulty transmission, continual jamming by French authorities, the resultant confusion of mutilated utterances. The obligation to undertake, in the intimacy of a family gathering, the joint reconstruction of the "nation's words," this participant interpretation and reenactment of the clash between the dying colonialism and the nascent nation is represented by Fanon as constituting the self-formation of postcolonial humanity as citizens of a radical democracy of action and speech (SR, 70–72; DC, 86–88). Fanon thus invites us to witness the privileged moment when the imagination's rebellion against censorship emerges from the privacy of the nocturnal dream into the embattled conversation of the familial conclave as nucleus of the public realm. As if to forestall the centripetal impulse of national pedagogy and the potential authoritarianism of every future griot, Fanon's narrative insists that the interpreter's "privileged" status is derived from the consent, the intersubjective agreement, of the assembled people. In cases of disputed understandings of events reported on the radio, the interpreter's word is by no means final: "But by common consent, after an exchange of views, it would be decided that the *Voice* had in fact spoken of these events, but that the interpreter had not caught the transmitted information. A real task of reconstruction would then begin. Everyone would participate, and the battles of yesterday and

the day before would be refought in accordance with deep aspirations and the unshakable faith of the group. The listener would compensate for the fragmentary nature of the news by an autonomous creation of information" (SR, 70; DC, 86).

We are here reminded that, notwithstanding the necessity of political education in the ways of instrumental and communicative practices alike, it is by virtue of the action and speech of the assembled people that the nation gathers knowledge of itself. At the end of "This is the Voice of Algeria" Fanon says, "The identification of the voice of the Revolution with the fundamental truth of the nation has opened limitless horizons." That truth—truth politically speaking—is an achievement, the product of what he earlier calls "dialogue" (SR, 79; DC, 94). In the same concluding paragraph of this remarkable text, Fanon avers that the practice of autonomy and responsibility in speech and action enabled by the appropriation of the radio would become normative for the postcolonial citizen: "In Algeria a disparity [*inadéquation*] between the people and what is intended to speak for them will not, after the war, be possible" (SR, 82; DC, 97: RT). The invention of tradition, that of truth as the work of critical agreement by the people acting as an *interpretive community*; but also that of citizenship as a right to demand an adequation between popular speech and public power: this is the "privileged experience" of appropriation as a radically democratic act which the nascent citizenry would have undergone.

The ink with which Fanon sketched this wondrous vision was barely dry when Algeria, like the rest of the newly independent nations, was overwhelmed by that authoritarian rule which would confiscate the people's power to speak, to judge, and to act. But shall we therefore begrudge Fanon the right of the political imagination to name unthought possibilities and to give voice to the most radical meanings of the project of decolonization? That ideal of the postcolonial future was in its essential details called forth by a particular memory of the colonial past, one made especially agonizing and inescapably audacious by the specific gravity of the experience of the African diaspora. It was of course in the service of Algeria that Fanon undertook his sustained political activity. It was in Algeria that he bore participant witness—or so he thought—to the liberating appropriation of modernity's instrumental and communicative practices. But this circumstance does not make Fanon's testimony fatally "Algero-centric."⁴⁶ For at the heart of that testimony is a searing memory

of the condition to which the colonial past reduced a people, what the people must in consequence undo and become in order that they might have the past not so much interred in oblivion, but rather interpreted as the context of their projects. The paradigmatic details of that past—details that would inform the subsequent vision of appropriation—were etched in Fanon's critical consciousness long before his Algerian experience. The monological authority of the colonizer's language as both the ordering principle of the world and sign of that peculiar institution of difference and antinomy which "Concerning Violence" would call the "dividing line"; the alienated and pathological relations of the colonized to this language and its artifacts; the ambiguous status of the class of putative intermediaries emblematically described as "the interpreters": these details of the colonial condition were first sketched by the African-Caribbean author of *Black Skin, White Masks*. They will remain as the paradigmatic structures and figures whose transformation would signal the openness of the postcolonial subject to the appropriation of refashioned symbolic forms, indeed to a new way of being in the world. It is against this antecedent horizon of memory and hope that Fanon would read the story of Algeria as a "privileged experience" of an inventive relation to history.

If Fanon's testimony is thus not Algerocentric in its ultimate prove-nance and inspiration, neither is it an exercise in an empirical "sociology of revolution," as the title of the 1968 edition of the work which contains these allegories of appropriation would have it.⁴⁷ Notwithstanding the manifest propositional form of Fanon's language, this text is not so much a description of a revolution in progress as it is an invocation of one yet to be accomplished. For one thing Fanon, as we have noted, distinguishes what I have called his political pragmatics of appropriation from the sociology of modernization. As statements purporting to be empirical reports of what took place in Algeria circa 1959—to say nothing of their enduring validity in the postindependence era—Fanon's narratives of the radical democratic foundations of appropriation are of course eminently refutable. These narratives are best read as accounts not so much of the processes of democratic entry into modernity, but rather of their historical and normative conditions of possibility: visionary and indeed hortatory utterances dictated by anguished knowledge of the world the colonizer made. They are thus a call for relations with technique, language, and conditions of action in ways radically

outlawed, according to Fanon, in the colonial context. The habit of democratic agency and autonomy which he discerns in reordered modes of instrumental and communicative practices is in truth a *possibility*, a way of being which, on Fanon's reading, the colonized must have intended to invent when, in the language of "Concerning Violence," they called the colonial world into question. Fanon's testimony seeks to capture and establish as a foundational principle of postcolonial existence the metamorphosis entailed by that questioning: "Yesterday they were completely denied responsibility; today they mean to understand everything and make all decisions" (DT, 52; WE, 94: RT).

Agency lost and regained. This narrative structure will henceforth function as a kind of normative standard for appraising the justice of transactions among postcolonial subjects, above all transactions between the citizen, the modern griot, and the political leader. From the meta-ethical consequences of this narrative structure—a description of anticolonial discourse in its most radical import—Fanon distills not indeed a transcendental guarantee for democratic citizenship but a principle of hope, and an admonition: implanted in the founding experience of the postcolonial citizen, he writes, is "an image of action which is very clear, very easy to understand and which may be recaptured by each one of the individuals which constitute the colonized people" (DT, 9; WE, 40–41: RT). We are entitled to ask whether this irrevocable rule of inalienable agency can hold in a world, the postcolonial world, under the imperious constraint to join the age of technology. Is this ideal—the ideal of a self-transparent subjectivity that is able to reenact its revolutionary beginnings at will—compatible with Fanon's recognition of the necessity of rational knowledge? Must not Fanon's vision of appropriation as an act of ironic complicity with the very symbols of alienation end by endorsing the benevolent despotism of modernizing reason and its avatars—the radical intelligentsia, the progressive technocrats, the modern griots, those who are trained practitioners of this complicity? From purveyors of "the master's orders" and invasive "truths" to "privileged interpreters" of "the nation's speech" voiced in differing idioms; from venal and ineffectual narcissists to craftsmen of organic meanings to be hewn at a breathless pace from disparate forms of material and symbolic culture: such is the transfiguration which the owners of "intellectual and technical capital" evidently undergo upon heeding the call of revolutionary appropriation. Could

it be, then, that with the vindication of the modern griot as the trickster under whose aegis the slaves wrest reason and liberty from the masters, Fanon has at last found a credible candidate for paramountcy in a social world wherein all pretenders to that office appear to have been dismissed and disqualified in the most irreverent epic roll call ever pronounced in the name of history? In the figure of the modern griot the acephalous revolution, under the constraint of "new national necessities," would seem to have discovered or recovered its head.

We are in the presence of the mode of reasoning which in the postcolonial context engenders a familiar temptation: that of an authoritarian rationalism in the service of a repressive but allegedly autocentric project of development. Fanon courageously confronted this reasoning and the temptation it proffers. Here in this quintessential world of necessity's call and time's impatience he repudiates the counsel of a new autocracy of reason. He reminds us that just as the national liberation struggle demanded the concerted action of the people lived as the personal responsibility of each and all, "so during the phase of national construction each citizen . . . ought to incarnate the continuing dialectical truth of the nation" (DT, 135; WE, 200). Each citizen—to echo Heidegger's etymological gloss on "dialectic"—ought to participate as a constitutive subject in the nation's *self-gathering speech* and its *self-uttering gathering*. Fanon is prepared, that is to say, to subordinate the demands of necessity and the order of technology to the ethics of communicative responsibility legislated by the story of national liberation. He is thereby led to issue a challenge that will strike every technocratic modernizer as a monument of Luddite perversity. He urges us to forgo building a bridge if it is not the people's will to undertake its construction:

If the building of a bridge does not enrich the consciousness of those who work on it, then the bridge ought not to be built and the citizens can go on swimming across the river or go by boat. The bridge should not be parachuted down from above; it should not be imposed by a *deus ex machina* upon the social scene; on the contrary it should come from the muscles and the brains of the citizens . . . *It is necessary that the citizen make the bridge his own* [Il faut que le citoyen s'approprié le pont]. (DT, 135–136; WE, 200–201, my emphasis: RT)

There is no technophobia here, no preoccupation with the inherent and ineluctable tyranny of instrumental reason and its artifacts. Nor is there implied here a dislike of technical experts. The passage says that "there may well be need of engineers and architects, sometimes completely foreign engineers and architects." But Fanon suggests that a development project which does not solicit the citizens' agency and responsibility is neither a testimony to development nor a project. In so doing, Fanon warns us against the salvationist rhetoric of the despotic developmentalist who, like Césaire's Henri Christophe, proposes transitional coercion in the name of the urgency of the present and the liberty of the future.⁴⁸

Nor is this all. "It is necessary that the citizen make the bridge his own." By this, Fanon means that the construction of the bridge—any authentic development project—"in its particulars and its totality" ought to be "taken up, conceived and assumed" by the citizens, the associated producers (*ibid.*: RT). Here is the crowning evidence, if any doubt still remained, that the enterprise of appropriation, the work by which the citizenry come into their own in their relations of material and symbolic production, does not end with the nationalization of the objects of production and the Africanization of experts, managers, and development agents. It is a measure of the humanist and radical democratic commitments of Fanon's vision that he finds the nationalist understanding of the dialectic of alienation and appropriation woefully inadequate. With the early Marx, Fanon suggests that the heteronomous relation of a subject to objects and products of labor which Marx called "alienation" is only superficially an expression of the ownership and nonownership of the objects and products; only in a symptomatic sense a function of the status of capitalist and worker as proprietor and nonproprietor. According to Marx a deep analysis, an etiology, of alienation will show that the fundamental fault resides in "the activity of alienation"—that is to say, in the nonvoluntary, coercive, and dehumanizing nature of the worker's work. If the product of labor is alienated, this is because "production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation."⁴⁹ It might be said that this is the dialectical causation which is missed by that figure fixated upon symptomatic relations, "the crude communist"⁵⁰—or the restitutionist nationalist.

In the passage on the bridge—an allegorical inquiry concerning technology—Fanon adumbrates what may be called a *postnationalist*

account of development and appropriation that mirrors Marx's etiology of estrangement. That critical vision profoundly questions the nationalist panacea and exposes the Afrocentric fallacy: the supposition that appropriation coincides with the indigenization of the ownership and the administration of things. If "Concerning Violence" enacts that understanding of alienation as racial dispossession, and of disalienation as repossession, restitution, reconquest of native ownership, the thesis on the bridge as an allegory of authentic appropriation tells an entirely different story. It teaches us that although material and symbolic objects may, after independence, be owned and managed by Africans, even nationalized and controlled by the postcolonial state, a decolonization of human existence will hardly occur if the people are not autonomous agents in building them. We are thus invited to disavow a repressive metaphysics of progress and development, one that sees in them an autotelic movement of being and time transcendent to the dialogical will and action of the citizenry.

Elsewhere in *The Wretched of the Earth* we are also urged to abandon the constant companion of this metaphysics of progress and development—the sinister metaphors of governance as a shepherd-herd relationship. To attack the "baneful role" of the leader in postcolonial societies, Fanon suggests, we must repudiate linguistic conventions which sanction authoritarian rule, tropes of political discourse which have a particularly seductive appeal for those whose self-appointed mission is to force the wretched of the earth to be free in a generation or two: we must begin with a radical democratic deconstruction of the very idea of the leader: "Leader": the word comes from the English verb 'to lead' [*conduire*]. The driver [*le conducteur*], the shepherd of the people, no longer exists today. The people are no longer a herd; they do not need to be driven. If the leader drives me on, I want him to realize that at the same time I show him the way. The nation should not become an object governed by a manitou" (DT, 123; WE, 184; RT). Against the Platos of all epochs and all cultures, Fanon here insists that the leader advances no ends other than those planted by the assembled citizenry. True, given the burden of history and the constraints of the present, he understands the necessity of political education in the cultivation of these ends. But he will keep faith with the founding narrative of agency lost and regained by leaving us with a "normative paradox":⁵¹

that of political education as *the practice of teaching the people a remembrance of their sovereignty*.

Now, political education means opening [the people's] minds, awakening them, and allowing the birth of their intelligence; as Césaire said, it is "to invent souls." To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean, making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people. (DT, 133; WE, 197)

I have advisedly kept intact Constance Farrington's rendition of Fanon's *homme illustre*—that familiar figure of the misappropriation of agency, of *substitutionism* in the postcolonial world—as "famous man." Could this rendition, this unedited instance of gender substitutionism in standard usage, be a Freudian slip? Could it be that Fanon's "narrative of liberation" is the story of male mastery lost and regained, regained at the expense of women? Worse still, is Fanon's narrative criminally silent, to say nothing of being collusively sexist, concerning women's subjugation and self-emancipation? Our conversation with Fanon would amount to little if we failed to attend to this last and first question.

WOMAN THE MEASURE

All classes must be deemed to have their special attributes; as the poet says of women, "Silence is a woman's glory," but this is not equally the glory of man.

—ARISTOTLE, *Politics*

The men's words were no longer law. The women were no longer silent.

—FANON, *A Dying Colonialism*

It is of the nature of things that we live and act in space. My body executes its will within a field of possibilities it contracts and cultivates in relation to other bodies. Lived space becomes pathological only when it is the function of a wholly enforced "geographical

ordering" of existence for the sequestration, confinement, and constant surveillance of bodies and souls. It is also of the nature of things that we encounter one another in lived space not with our bare and unvarnished face but wearing veils and masks, devices of guarded self-disclosure. Far from the mask and the veil being accursed emblems of inauthenticity, they are ironically contrivances of individuation, primitive and perennial paraphernalia for the revelation of being to the society of other beings. Senghor, lyricist of the primordial, has this in mind when he sings of "*masques aux visages sans masques*."⁵² These human universals become pathologies of lived experience only when the veil functions as a marker of the sequestered self, and only when the mask serves as an artifice for the surreptitious crossing of the "dividing line," for the compulsive, self-loathing, and doomed attempt to transgress forbidden spaces of desire and action. Such are the deformations of lived space, of the veil and the mask—"existential deviations" from the poetics of social being—diagnosed by Fanon's dramaturgy of the colonial condition.

Are these stigmata of alienation and the processes of their removal experienced in undifferentiated ways by all colonized subjects? Is there in fact a unitary subject of estrangement and self-appropriation in the colonial context? The illicit reductiveness of the notion of *the* colonized subject and the repressive "totalizations," ironically, of what has come to be called "postcolonial theory," have not gone unnoticed. A recent critic of this theory has called attention to its "exclusions," its habit of "erasing the difference between and within postcolonial societies"—difference, above all, relating to class, gender, caste, and ethnicity.⁵³ Is Fanon's dialectic of experience guilty of these exclusions?

We have seen how it is that, under the impress of a resurgent and disquieting knowledge of class, Fanon's narrative comes to revise the story of a unitary colonized subject initially told by "Concerning Violence." As a consequence of this revision, the narrative evokes a panorama of collective self-appropriation predicated on the recognition of difference. Protesting against "*syncrétisme simplifiant*," a reductive and coercive will to unity, Fanon speaks in vindication of "the search for truth in local situations" (DT, 134; WE, 199: RT). As he sees it, the "vast epic" which enacts the nation's "truth," that is to say its "self-unveiling," is not quite the same thing as "that magnificent song" of nationalism which enchants precisely by repressing knowledge of differing situations and aspirations—the very

texture of what he calls, contrastively, “*political and social consciousness*” (DT, 137; WE, 203, my emphasis). The question remains: does Fanon’s recognition of the complexity of the social and political go far enough in the definition of its objects? More precisely, does it register the specific gravity of the modes in which woman’s body is compulsorily veiled, masked, sequestered, administered, restrained from the exercise of agency in speech and action? Does it then acknowledge the possibility that the story of woman’s regeneration as an autonomous postcolonial subject and the “national allegory”⁵⁴ of collective agency lost and regained do not coincide—even after that allegory has come to include in its argument the tale of difference in the figure of class? Fanon’s critical vision would have to be accounted seriously flawed if it could be shown that it fails to address the question of gender. For to ascertain the prospects for a people’s self-appropriation out of rival news and needs conveyed by a plurality of interlocutors; to invoke the common good in the teeth of manifest difference—this is the mission of political judgment in which Fanon’s dialectic of experience culminates. That task would be incomplete, would indeed hardly have begun, without a critical engagement with the fact of gender, quintessential expression of the voice of difference in the speech of oneness. The democratic credentials of Fanon’s account of political judgment and its claim to prefigure a “new humanism” would scarcely be credible unless it honored what *Petals of Blood* calls “the woman’s story” as both emblem and special case of a human community’s historical agonies and its prospects of regeneration.⁵⁵ Why hold Fanon’s discourse to this radical version of the principle of internal coherence?

The tradition of political philosophy suggests that there is an elective affinity between humanism and democracy. It is no accident that Plato was equally repelled by “love of the demos” and by the notion that humanity is the measure of the being of things and the truth of propositions.⁵⁶ But it is also no accident that the standard English rendition of the Western humanist creed canonically credited to Protagoras is “*man* the measure.” The chief defect of the old humanism, the radical poverty of its democratic commitments, is contained in this authorized misreading of its emblematic utterance. The new humanism will be true to its name only if it undoes in word and deed this legalized substitutionism, the masculine misappropriation of generic human entitlements. Perhaps the founding act of the new humanism—one that takes its bearings from the gender neutral-

ity or rather gender inclusiveness of the Akan name for the human being, *onipa*—is to take the condition of woman as a mark of the degree to which human beings in a determinate place and time have truly come into their own. Perhaps a propaedeutic to an authentic humanism is to make woman the measure. I believe that Fanon's dialectic points in that direction. Let us attempt to reconstruct the suggestions to that effect that are found in *Black Skin, White Masks* and *A Dying Colonialism*.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, the second chapter is entitled "The Woman of Color and the White Man," and the third is entitled "The Man of Color and the White Woman." The fact of two distinct chapters on the question of interracial desire notwithstanding, these are not importantly separate and gender-specific accounts of the drama of desire under the sign of race. Rather, they function as illustrations of a single pathology of recognition, instantiations of what the introduction calls "a massive psychoexistential complex" (PN, 29; BS, 14). The two chapters in effect constitute one phenomenology of alienated desire set in motion by the material, affective, and symbolic prohibitions of the "dividing line." According to this phenomenology, the politics of race vitiates the possibility of that reciprocal recognition which, contrary to Sartre and contemporary postmodern critics of Fanon, is the latent promise of desire and language. In the context of racial bondage, all affective and communicative relations are deformed. The subjectivity of every colonized person is assailed, traumatized, and sent on a quest for a "new way of being" that meets white approval or, better, wins "incorporation into a group that had seemed hermetic" (PN, 39, 66; BS, 25, 58).

There *are* gendered inflections and nuances in the nature of a racially subjugated people's existential and affective relations with their masters. These inflections and nuances are recognizably derivative of generic structures of gender hierarchy, communicative and affective restraints, compulsions, rules—to say nothing of their accompanying symbols and myths—with which the historical world is littered. Fanon's analytic vocabulary repeats the discursive properties of these structures. He reenacts, in the gendered inflections of his phenomenology of desire and recognition under the sign of race, indices of the world-historical sexism and inequity of the man-woman relation. So it is that after dividing desire as a genus into its inauthentic and authentic forms—"a movement of aggression" as opposed to "a movement of love"—the opening paragraph of "The

Woman of Color and the White Man" goes on to evoke the species of authentic desire in two radically different idioms: "The movement of love" is described first as "a gift of self," and second as "the assumption of my manhood." The activity which contains the promise of reciprocal recognition, "authentic love" as the foundation of the moral life ("une superstructure valorisante"), is unequally gendered (PN, 53; BS, 41). So it is that Mayotte Capécia is not simply an exemplar of the colonized consciousness under the spell of that Manichean conception of the world which instigates in *all* the colonized the dream of whiteness, the impossible project of trespassing on the preserves of "whiteness as property."⁵⁷ There is in her mode of desire a special desperation and submissiveness recognizable in "the Mayotte Capécias of all nations" (PN, 55-56; BS, 44-45). What is this local instance of a universal abjection, if not, the text suggests, the characteristic mode of woman's desire and relation to man produced by the affective rules of patriarchy? And so it is that in the case of the black man, the colonized person's desire "to be recognized not as *black* but as *white*" comes in the familiar shape of masculinist fantasies of conquest—conquest of the white world through conquest of the white woman (PN, 71; BS, 63).

Yet parasitic as it is upon the universal history of gender hierarchy and sexism, the pathology of desire in the colonial context is, these two chapters suggest, not only *sui generis* but also generalizable for men and women. In effect, these texts allude to the generic structures of the relations of men and women in order to indicate the *normal* pathology that throws into relief the *peculiar* pathology of desire and recognition in the colonial context; a peculiar pathology which afflicts men no less than women. That peculiarity resides in the fact that in the face of the white person all colonized subjects, men and women, are, so to speak, "feminized": such is the historical nature of the offer of "black love to a white soul" (PN, 65; BS, 56). The subject-object relationship which generically characterizes the encounter of men and women specifically characterizes the affective relations of the colonizers and the colonized, all the colonizers and all the colonized. Upon the perverse intersubjectivity of gendered desire as a historical universal there supervenes what Fanon calls a "situational neurosis": a compulsion on the part of the colonized person to "run away from his individuality, to annihilate her presence," in every encounter with the Other, the colonizer (PN, 68; BS, 60: RT).

That is why Jean Veneuse, a male character in René Maran's *Un homme pareil aux autres* and exemplar of neurotic desire in Fanon's third chapter, is incapable of measuring up to the perverse norm of masculinity in his relations with a white woman. For he is first and foremost a colonized being, indistinguishable in his habit of servility and self-renunciation from Mayotte Capécia; he loves just like a colonized person—that is to say, just like a “woman.” Indeed, so abysmally does Jean Veneuse fail to avail himself of the generic resources, the banal evils, of male supremacy; so pathetically does he exemplify the “affective erethism” of the colonized toward “the white world” (PN, 68; BS, 60); so much is he like Mayotte Capécia and “the Mayotte Capécias of all nations,” that Fanon quite loses his temper and becomes unwilling to grant him the excuse of a special historical causation of his abject self-doubt and prostration before the white woman. “I contend,” writes Fanon, “that Jean Veneuse represents not an example of black-white relations, but a certain mode of behaviour in a neurotic who by coincidence is black” (PN, 84; BS, 79). Moreover, Fanon follows Sartre's existential psychoanalysis in repudiating any determinist account of the operations of psychic (and social) structures. The manner in which we live a neurotic structure is at least in part a “purely personal” determination (PN, 85; BS, 81). In that lived relation to a neurotic structure, the gender of the subject is not, we are to believe, decisive.

In effect, then, these two chapters argue that in the affective relations of the colonized to the white world and the white Other, the gender of the subject is inconsequential. There is a certain equality of male and female in their interactions with the ruling race, both in the mode of alienation and in the project of disalienation. When Fanon evokes, in the wrenching fifth chapter, the tragic labyrinths of existence-for-others in a racist world order, he portrays psychoexistential experiences of sequestration and self-alienation in which gender, or for that matter any figure of difference other than race, hardly features. In so doing, Fanon prepares the ground for the announced goal of his analytic enterprise: “the disalienation of the *black person*” (PN, 28, 50; BS, 12–13, 38). This principal preoccupation leads him to abstract from gender relations internal to colonized society, to say nothing of those native to the history of human societies. When he does touch on intraracial gender relations, he tends to ascribe their pathologies to the psychological consequences of racial subjugation which afflict all the colonized and distort their

relations with one another. It is as though the project of disalienation unites man and woman in a common cause that ultimately depends, for its efficacy, on the individual's responsibility and autonomy.

A phenomenological investigation of the *general* structures and effects of alienation, wedded to an existentialist insistence on the individual's free relation to these structures and effects—this is what leads the author of *Black Skin, White Masks* to all but exclude gender as a critical term of psychosocial and political discourse. As we have seen, the more dialectical texts of the “later” Fanon are able to dramatize identity and difference in the experience of colonized humanity. *A Dying Colonialism* inaugurates the epistemological turn which would enable Fanon's narrative to resuscitate the fact of gender, to represent the story of alienation and disalienation as a gendered process.⁵⁸

We have already encountered an instance of this gendered narrative. In his account of the appropriation of the radio as a modern linguistic object, Fanon comes to confront a conundrum generated by the ethnoculturalist sociology that in Algeria informed both colonialist and nationalist strategies of modernization: how to allow the radio into the Algerian home, yet escape the alleged libertinism of Western sexual mores audibly transmitted by the radio. The answer proposed by masculinist sociology clothed in the garb of cultural relativism was “the staggering of broadcasts addressed to the family as a whole, to male groups, to female groups, etc.” (SR, 53; DC, 70). To make a different world safe for modernity through segregation, through unequal rights of communicative competence: this is the ingenious solution fashioned to answer the problem of “moral taboos” against the reception of the modern artifact. To this counsel of separate and unequal roads to modernity, Fanon's allegory of appropriation opposes a bracing alternative. Uniting the public and private realms in its critical vision, Fanon's account of the assembled family reconstructing news of the national liberation war broadcast by the *Voice of Algeria* in the teeth of official censorship and jamming has an important feature we have not yet stressed: “Traditional resistances,” writes Fanon, “broke down and one could see in a *douar* groups of families in which fathers, mothers, daughters, elbow to elbow, would scrutinize the radio dial waiting for the *Voice of Algeria*” (SR, 67; DC, 83).

To hear Fanon tell it, an important consequence of this reconstitution of the family as an interpretive community is to abolish the

gender division of communicative rights endorsed by cultural relativists, Western and “anticolonialist” alike. It is as if the momentous “decision” of the nascent nation “to speak and tell a story about itself” derives its legitimacy from the degree to which women win their rights to speak, hear, and shape the “nation’s words,” the degree to which they win their fundamental human rights as citizens. More than thirty years before the United Nations Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, June 1993) confronted opposition to the notion of universal human rights—particularly as they relate to women—in the name of cultural relativism, Fanon’s visionary narrative of communicative action freed from gender segregation bequeathed to us a powerful normative archetype.

But to be able to say something, to be able to act as a founding member of the democracy of speaking subjects, woman must be freed of all the institutions that sequester and hem her in; all the signs and artifacts that compulsorily veil her being, obstruct the disclosure of her agency, mark her as a heterogeneous Other, and discipline her into acquiescing to this spurned otherness. No wonder, then, that the very first essay in *A Dying Colonialism*, this invocation of the “radical mutation” that gives birth to postcolonial humanity, portrays the drama of woman’s unconcealment as a metaphor and measure of the nascent community’s “self-unveiling.”

“Algeria Unveiled” evinces the dilemma of critical political and cultural discourse in the colonies and neocolonies of the world-system. How to register, even vindicate, the anti-imperialist “love of one’s own,” knowing that this homestead of the particular is in many respects a house of bondage, the refuge of ancestral and recrudescing institutions of repression and exclusion, particularly of women? How to endorse a liberating “love of the good,” a universal vision of justice, knowing that such an endorsement—without which victims of the particular have no court of appeal—is always open to suspicion as an echo of the master’s voice and its counterfeit universals?⁵⁹ Isn’t such a critical discourse, at once anti-imperialist and postnationalist, compelled to speak with a forked tongue? Accordingly, “Algeria Unveiled” is unmistakably a text in solidarity with the revolt against cultural imperialism. In the interstices of its anti-imperialist stance, however, can be heard a hermeneutics of suspicion, one that subjects to critical inspection—specifically to gender analysis—the nationalist conceit of a community’s original collective identity, besieged by the invaders, and regained by the concerted action of all without preju-

dice or injury to any class of citizens. The essay asks, in the words of a recent detective of ethnic particularism, "at what cost in female personality the community has renewed itself."⁶⁰ And it inquires into relations of conflict and kinship between anti-imperialist cultural politics and the will to autonomy expressed in women's symbolic practices. The occasion for this critical inspection of the nationalist narrative of a common destiny is the story of the veil worn by the Algerian woman as exemplar of gendered modes of self-presentation and subjectivity.

The essay begins by invoking the abstract status of the veil as part of the common cloth of the community's expressive conventions, its signs of collective individuation, uncontentious emblems of its uniqueness (SR, 16; DC, 35). It is typical of consensualist nationalism to hold fast to this abstract function of the cultural artifact or symbolic practice, and so to regard any tampering with it as an intolerable assault on the collective soul. On this view "the battle of the veil," French colonialism's attempt since the 1930s to unveil Algerian women and "the native's bristling resistance," is a battle over the common good (SR, 18, 29; DC, 37, 46-47). To guard the veiled body of the woman is to show reverence for the body politics's singularity, piety toward what is one's own.

Right from the beginning, however, the essay obliquely questions this notion of a commonality innocent of contradiction and discord, this picture of a collective subjectivity made manifest in its characteristic expressive forms. These signifiers of collective identity turn out to be gravely gendered, and not in the trivial sense that women and men wear different kinds of apparel. Rather they are visible symbols of separate and unequal kinds of subjectivity, gender-specific modes of what the essay subsequently calls the "dialectic of the body and the world" (SR, 42-43; DC, 59). Disturbing the myth of apparel as an emblem of national individuation, the text lets it be known that there is more to the politics of identity than what is evident to the tourist eye and what is recounted by the nationalist imagination.

In the Arab Maghreb, the veil belongs to the clothing traditions of the Tunisian, Algerian, Moroccan and Libyan national societies. For the tourist and the foreigner, the veil demarcates both Algerian society and its feminine component. In the case of the Algerian man, on the other hand, regional modifications can be noted: the fez in urban centers, turbans and *djellabas* in the countryside. *The mas-*

culine garb allows a certain margin of choice, a modicum of heterogeneity. The woman seen in her white veil unifies the perception that one has of Algerian feminine society. *Obviously what we have here is a uniform which tolerates no modification, no variant.* (SR, 17; DC, 35–36; my emphasis)

The text here adumbrates a gender analysis of the expressive artifact. It tells us that the symbolic device by means of which the “feminine component” of Algerian society is ostensibly individuated, the veil, is not in fact specifically national. Fanon does not go so far as to say with internationalist feminism that women as symbolic actors have no country. What he does say is that the veil belongs to a tradition of female self-presentation which is transnational. By contrast, the male garb is national precisely by being manifested in “regional modifications” specific to the national society. Moreover, this regional variability appears to exemplify a more general property of men’s expressive action: there is in it “a certain margin of choice, a modicum of heterogeneity.” The male artifact is multiply configurable, testifying thereby to the relative autonomy of the agent in relation to the symbolic structure. The veil is, on the other hand, characterized by invariance, uniformity, formal constraint and closure. There is a hint of a contrast between the rigidity of the transnational patriarchal rules which govern women’s self-presentation and the comparative openness of the normative principles which guide men’s participation in the national culture. What Fanon later calls “the traditional grip of the *haïk*” (SR, 24; DC, 42: RT) may thus be read as a description of the peculiar way in which women are made to relate to tradition: tradition as a restraining force rather than as an enabling structure of action.

The forked tongue with which the essay speaks—its critical endorsement and transcendence of nationalist cultural politics—is registered in this opening judgment of traditional expressive practices as rooted in a gendered structure of differential autonomy, inequities in the body’s primitive experience of agency, its freedom of self-disposal. As we will presently see, these opening remarks, in effect a demystification of the notion of original identity and identical origins, soon develop into harsh strictures: strictures against restraints upon the space of human expression and action symbolized by gendered conventions of self-presentation, specifically by what Fanon calls the “institution” of the veil (SR, 25; DC, 43).

But if Fanon serves notice of undertaking a detective hermeneutics of tradition in the shape of gendered institutions of symbolic behavior, he will have no truck with forcible programs of unveiling the Algerian woman—programs pursued since the 1930s by the French colonialists. True, the veil as a traditional institution might have been coercive, restrictive of women's agency. And it might have been repressive: it might have been an instrument, as Marcuse would have put it, of a repressive sublimation of the woman's body, deflecting from it the gaze of the community of men—the better to subject her completely to the exclusive power and pleasure of one man (SR, 26; DC, 44). But Fanon sees in the colonialists' recurrent dream and policy of freeing the Algerian woman of the veil a will to knowledge, to possession, to violence; a desire to violate by unveiling the woman. The liberation proffered by this coercive act of modernity trades the repressive sublimation of the woman's body effected by the traditional institution for its repressive desublimation. It is in reality an attempt, this policy of unveiling the woman, to reenact "the freedom given to the sadism" of the original European conquerors; a desire on the part of the colonizer to repeat at the psychopolitical level "the specific features of his relations with colonized society"—relations of precipitate, invasive violence. This much is attested by the fact, according to Fanon, that "the rape of the Algerian woman in the dream of the European is always preceded by a rending of the veil" (SR, 28; DC, 45–46). Less shrouded in the penumbra of preconscious desire is the political intent of the policy of unveiling the Algerian woman: bringing about "the disintegration, at whatever cost, of forms of existence likely to evoke a national reality" (SR, 18; DC, 37). Of such open secrets are colonialist projects of enlightenment and emancipation made.

What Fanon cannot abide, above all, is the species of Orientalism which he detects in colonialist explanations of the institution of the veil: "racist arguments" asserting the existence of an obdurate Arab mentality which is impervious to reason, incapable of self-transformation, constitutionally predisposed to the domination of women. The Arab woman would have to be liberated, unveiled, revealed as the self-determining being she is, in defiance of a recalcitrant ethnic essence lodged in the physiognomy of the male (SR, 21–23; DC, 39–41). The consequences of Fanon's fury with Orientalism and the specious enlightenment it proffers are instructive. Adopting a proto-Foucauldian stance of ethical neutrality or—what is the same thing—

absolute skepticism toward all discourse, Fanon is led to place talk of the Algerian woman's bondage in quotation marks. This is particularly true of the appendix to "Algeria Unveiled," a text published two years earlier, significantly in a movement periodical, *Résistance Algérienne*. There Fanon greets allegations of women's subjugation founded on Orientalist assumptions with radical doubt. He writes with unconcealed sarcasm: "To begin with, there is the well-known status of the Algerian woman—her alleged confinement, her inconsequence, her humility, her silent existence bordering on quasi-absence. And 'Moslem society' which has made no place for her, amputating her personality, allowing her neither development nor maturity, maintaining her in a perpetual infantilism." One step farther, and Fanon is prepared to say in all seriousness that

The Algerian woman's ardent love of the home is not a limitation imposed by the universe. It is not hatred of the sun or the streets or spectacles. It is not a flight from the world. What is true is that under normal conditions, an interaction must exist between the family and society at large. The home is the foundation of social truth, but society authenticates and legitimizes the family. The colonial structure is the very negation of this reciprocal justification. *The Algerian woman, in imposing such a restriction on herself, in choosing a form of existence limited in scope, was deepening her consciousness of struggle and preparing for combat.* (SR, 49; DC, 65–66; my emphasis: RT)

Here, we are entitled to protest, Fanon has crossed the line that separates anti-imperialist satire, a sardonic revulsion with Orientalist lore, from an uncritical endorsement of a reactionary nationalist nostrum passing itself off as a principled act of cultural resistance. But could it be that Fanon's talk of the woman's free choice of domestication and "a restricted but coherent existence" is an indirect citation of the ideology of the ruling gender, and that it is by no means his last word on the matter?

This much is true of the essay's dominant thrust: If its author is not exactly taken in by colonialist notions of Oriental despotism, patriarchal oppression, and the legitimacy of "the civilizing mission," neither is he enamored of what he calls "reactional forms of behaviour" adopted by the colonized in answer to "the violence of the occupier"—say, a resurrected cult of the veil:

In the face of the violence of the occupier, the colonized found himself defining a principled position with respect to a formerly inert element of the native cultural configuration. It was the colonialist's frenzy to unveil the Algerian woman, it was his gamble on winning the battle of the veil at whatever cost, that were to provoke the native's bristling resistance. The deliberately aggressive intentions of the colonialist with respect to the *haïk* gave a new life to this dead element of the Algerian cultural stock—dead because stabilized, without any progressive change in form or color. (SR, 29; DC, 46–47)

The result of the colonialist policy of coercive emancipation is thus to provoke a “turning back, a regression” to practices predicated on “a rigid separation of the sexes.” Furthermore, it generates an indiscriminate refusal of “the values of the occupier, even if these values objectively be worth choosing” (SR, 46–47; DC, 62–63). Fanon is not unsympathetic to “the desire to assert a distinct identity [*volonté de singularisation*], concern with keeping intact a few shreds of national existence,” that frames these reactive attitudes. But he wonders aloud whether every “attitude of counter-assimilation,” every species of counter-hegemonic cultural politics, is a harbinger of universal freedom (SR, 23–24; DC, 41–42). He is unable to discern the blessings of liberty in a retentive and protectionist traditionalism that discourages a culture's dialogue with itself concerning its symbolic institutions, concerning in particular the gender relations of its expressive practices. That is why we must treat with a grain of salt Fanon's own evocation of the rhetoric of oneness, of uncontentious unity, which accompanies such neotraditionalist cultural politics. According to that discourse, “men, women, children, the whole Algerian people experienced at one and the same time their unity, their national vocation and the recasting of the new Algerian society” (SR, 46; DC, 62). We simply follow Fanon's lead if we listen to this rhetoric of unanimity with skeptical ears.

A truly regenerative cultural politics must, according to Fanon, go beyond the reactive and regressive vindication of the ancestral; it must go beyond the atavistic “cult of the veil”—this ironic defense of an emblem of division in the name of community. It must, above all, refuse to accept the official masculine description of national commonalities and peculiarities as ultimate, and listen to what women say and do regarding inherited structures and institutions.

This process of internal narrative decolonization begins then with attending to "important modifications" or "innovations" brought to bear upon symbolic structures—here the "institution" of the veil—by the independent action of women.

Significantly, we are told that these "innovations," testimonies to woman's story of freedom, "are of particular interest in view of the fact that they were at no time included in the program of struggle. The doctrine of the Revolution, the strategy of combat, never postulated the necessity for a revision of forms of behaviour with respect to the veil" (SR, 30; DC, 47). This is a remarkable confession. The text here owns up to the exclusions of the official nationalist project scripted, unmistakably, by male authors to be staged by male protagonists. It is as if the original version of the "national allegory," what Fanon describes as "the doctrine of the Revolution," had been composed entirely by virtue of an act of willful oblivion, systematic censorship of the experience of half its human constituency.⁶¹ An integral narrative of decolonization, one committed to an internal decolonization of life's narrative, must thus of necessity be disloyal to the founders' intentions, dissent from their truncated universals, reenact the specific agony of women's existence and the special ecstasy of their transforming work.

Such a complication of the original plot of anticolonial discourse, Fanon tells us, is occasioned by events which cause the "machine" of revolutionary action itself to become "complicated." In answer to the requirements of a "total war," women, excluded from combat until 1955, are mobilized, first as auxiliaries and eventually as "essential elements" of the national liberation force. For the first time, the "Revolution" comes to "depend on their presence and action." But this imperative call on women's agency—with its attendant requirements of the body's unregimented spatiality, its strategic mobility, in a word its freedom—must come into collision with those very gendered practices whose vindication is regarded by masculinist nationalism as a mark of "counter-assimilation." The demands of revolutionary action will have to wreak vengeance upon these practices of which the veil is a visible symbol: the enclosure of the woman's body in "confined spaces," her "relatively cloistered life, with its known, categorized, regulated comings and goings," her enforced lack of familiarity with "limitless horizons" of action and expression (SR, 30–32; DC, 48–49).

There is in this characterization of the woman's condition no hint,

this time, of that eagerness to satirize Orientalism which leads Fanon elsewhere in the essay to regurgitate nationalist evasions and denials of woman's internal subjugation. Quite the contrary: he sees in women's entry into the drama of historical action such a radical break with traditional modes of their embodiment and spatiality, that he evokes it in a language that prefigures his description of decolonization in the opening paragraphs of *The Wretched of the Earth*. Just as decolonization, according to "Concerning Violence," abruptly and "without transition" transfigures a dehumanized people into "privileged actors," so the appearance of women upon the public stage of revolutionary deeds is nothing less than "an authentic birth in a pure state, without preliminary instruction [*sans propédeutique*]." So unheralded is this experience of historical action, so unauthorized by patriarchal tradition, and so contrary to normative expectations of woman's moral capacities, that Fanon says of the Algerian woman turned citizen-warrior that she "rises directly to the level of tragedy" (SR, 33; DC, 50). The disclosure of woman's agency, her decloistering, is, on this view, an event every bit as subversive of the order of things as, indeed arguably more cataclysmic than, the program of national liberation. Perhaps the essence of authentic decolonization consists in its manifestations in transformed social relations, such as those of gender.

As the above account indicates, it is in the vortex of revolutionary war that this transformation of relations between women and men is prefigured. Fanon evokes a dramatic moment in the course of the war when the Algerian woman, in order to avoid detection, must walk unveiled into the European quarters, there to carry grenades concealed in her bag to the waiting *fidai*. In the strategic transactions which ensue, Fanon detects what Marx in a different context—and somewhat less auspiciously—called a "change in the physiognomy of our *dramatis personae*." To paraphrase Marx: she who before was kept sequestered, confined, shrouded in enforced mystery, must now traverse the city of man unveiled in her body and unconstrained in her movement. By contrast, it is the male *fidai* whose body, thanks to fear of detection, now loses its customary insouciance, its subjective certainty, and is rendered tense.⁶² Man and woman will henceforth follow a "parallel path" in the quest for national and social freedom but by virtue of a renegotiated relationship of identity and difference, and on condition that they witness a reciprocal transformation of their bodies as places of expressive and communicative

action (SR, 40; DC, 57). This is how Fanon describes the consequences for the woman: "The absence of the veil subverts [*altère*] the Algerian woman's corporal schema. She quickly has to invent new dimensions for her body, new means of muscular control. She has to create for herself an attitude of unveiled-woman-outside . . . The Algerian woman who walks stark naked into the European city relearns her body, redeploys it in a totally revolutionary fashion. *This new dialectic of the body and the world is decisive in the case of the woman*" (SR, 42; DC, 59; my emphasis: RT).

In the ironic permutations of this "dialectic," the veil will be "removed and reassumed again and again" in obedience to shifting strategic and political necessities. It will be necessary for women to don the veil again in order to conceal weapons in it, even to play to the hilt the role of the proverbial "fatma." And when the French colonialists upon discovering this subterfuge ordered the removal of the veil, "Algerian women who had long since dropped the veil once again donned the *haïk*, thus affirming that it was not true that woman liberated herself at the invitation of France and of General de Gaulle" (SR, 44-46; DC, 61-62).

What significance does Fanon appear to attach to these metamorphoses of symbolic usages and their gendered forms? At the heart of this critical narrative of identity is Fanon's poeticist sense of our presence in the world. He appreciates, even delights in, the ceremonial ways in which we are condemned to appear and the fictive ways in which we are constrained to act. But Fanon's historical sense teaches him to recognize the degree to which these dramas of social being in their concrete forms minister to relations of power and signify the relative status of social agents, the space of freedom in which they are allowed to enact their agency. We approximate the possibility of expressive liberty to the extent that the area of the body's movement and the artifice for its disclosure are neither externally legislated nor made to designate an unalterable status. What Fanon says of the functional metamorphoses of the veil—namely, that it came to be "*manipulated [voile instrumentalisé]*"—is thus paradigmatic of the possibility of expressive freedom (SR, 44; DC, 61). The measure of freedom is the degree to which space and symbol, area of action and device of self-disclosure, are multiply configurable, open to the agent's choice of ends and means, and are thus no longer signifiers of a radically compulsory and constricted identity. Fanon thus sees in *l'instrumentalisation du voile*, in the willed refigurations

of the veil on the public theater of revolutionary action, an experience in which "the transformation of the Algerian woman is profiled [*se dessine*]" (SR, 83; DC, 99: RT).

But only profiled, prefigured. For not until woman replicates or experiences in the private sphere, at home and within the family, this subordination of roles, rules, and relations to a "new dialectic of the body and the world," can it be said that she is in the vicinity of the life of freedom. Fanon in effect warns us that the entry of woman into the public realm—be it in the form of clandestine revolutionary operations, or visible acts of cultural resistance, or even the exercise of rights and duties in political institutions—would be but a partial and ephemeral victory, unless the habits of self-determination and willed obligation are made manifest in the home. That is why the description of the metamorphoses of the veil as a profile, nothing more nor less than a presentiment of woman's self-transformation, occurs at the beginning of an essay on the family: the family, matrix of the problem of freedom and bondage.

For Fanon, then, there is no question of recasting the public sphere in the image of the private, of civilizing citizenship with the putative virtues of familial life.⁶³ Nor is it a matter of seeing home and public world as radically separate entities that are governed by two kinds of authority, two heterogeneous orders of rights and obligations, and that therefore generate incommensurable versions of the problem of freedom and domination. "The home," he has already pointed out, "is the foundation of social truth, but society authenticates and legitimizes the family." Structures that stand in a relation of "reciprocal justification," interdependent "regimes of truth" as Foucault might put it, public and private spheres share kindred pathologies of agency and community, and cry for mutual regeneration.

In "The Algerian Family," Fanon completely drops the quotation marks with which, in a strategic complicity with cultural nationalism, he had on occasion placed talk of the oppression of women. For he now ascribes to his protagonists—in truth he demands of them—the knowledge that an authentic and radical project of decolonization requires of the colonized society an unsparing act of critical introspection: "*It must undertake an immense effort upon itself, strain all its joints, renew its blood and its soul*" (SR, 85; DC, 101; the emphasis is Fanon's). Chief among the organic defects to which this call to collective self-scrutiny and renewal must attend is the moral status of women in the home: the reality of gendered differentials in the

experience of agency; the fact that from adolescence the woman is subjected to an atrophy of her autonomy. Between the girl and the males of the household there is instituted a minor-and-guardian relationship, one consequently in which "discussions," or dialogical encounters, are scrupulously avoided. The victim of this repressive socialization is not only banished from the public sphere, disempowered as a citizen; she "has no opportunity," in the most intimate and decisive locus of her existence, "to develop her personality or to take any initiatives" (SR, 90-91; DC, 105-106).

Remarkably, the images, the very vocabulary, with which Fanon now characterizes the subjugation of women are precisely those that he will employ to describe the colonial condition in "Concerning Violence." Such is the audacity of his critical vision, the measure of its liberation from the anxieties and apologetics of nationalism, that he is prepared to draw the most disquieting analogy: of the Algerian woman at home, Fanon writes that she is "uneducated, veiled, blocked, *just as Algeria as a whole is by colonial domination*" (SR, 92; my emphasis).⁶⁴ In this and the ensuing passages, the story of colonial bondage serves as a kind of epic simile for the portrait of women's subjugation. The same metaphors of coercion and coarctation, the same organizing tropes of space and spatial delimitation of existence, expression, and action, are deployed. Just as the colonial world, according to "Concerning Violence," is a "narrow world strewn with prohibitions [*ce monde rétréci semé d'interdictions*]," so the experience of women is said to be one of systematic "restrictions," of captivity in a "narrow world in which she lived without responsibility [*le monde rétréci et irresponsable dans lequel elle vivait*]" (DT, 7; WE, 37; SR, 92-93; DC, 107).

That "The Algerian Family" precedes "Concerning Violence" in publication means that the formal and conceptual relationship between Fanon's account of the "colonial context" and his description of women's condition is by no means one of unilinear causation or derivation, as though the terms of the one were metaphorically transferred to the other. It is not a matter, as with Robin Morgan's "colonial analogy," of applying the antecedent figure of the colonized to the situation of women, but rather of the analogical representation of two domains of experience in a single critical vision. The implications of this analogical representation are that structures of women's subjugation precede and prefigure colonial domination; and that the colonial context reproduces and reorganizes the institutions

of patriarchal lordship and bondage. On this view, woman must doubly live, and doubly undo, the life of sequestration and obstructed subjectivity which is the common and defining condition of the colonized. Doubly confined and concealed, woman must undertake a dual reconquest of "forbidden space" and a dual act of self-unveiling.

What "Concerning Violence" calls "the challenge of the colonized to the colonial world" and what "The Algerian Family" describes as "the transformation of the woman" are thus enmeshed in complex bonds of kinship and difference. How could it be otherwise, given the gender division of conditions of existence that lurks beneath the anticolonialist rhetoric of the undifferentiated captivity of each and all? From civil society and the public sphere where he is hemmed in and humiliated by the colonizer, the man will go home, there, as Fanon puts it, to enjoy "an almost lordly status" in his relations with women (SR, 90; DC, 105). Feminized as a colonized subject, the male returns to his household as a colossus, his masculinity instantly recovered. For the male, the union of patriarchy and colonialism provides an intriguing education in gender crossing, dictated by the differing modes of subjectivity he must enact in different spheres of existence. In the colonial context, in a racist world order, home is the perfect haven wherein a battered and bruised masculine subjectivity may rouse itself from abjection and reclaim the original position of "sovereignty" (SR, 89; DC, 104). It is thus a doubly pathological self which the man asserts at home, one overdetermined by the traditional institution of patriarchal sovereignty—with its proscription of dialogical relations between male and female—and that hypertrophy of reactive masculinity generated by racial subjugation. The principal victim of this ancestral and reactive formation of the male supremacist personality is, of course, woman.

Could it be, then, that the nationalist allegory of agency lost and regained is pathologically gendered, hence seriously and tragically flawed? Could it be that at the heart of anticolonial nationalism is a largely all-male endeavor to reunite, to bring together under one sturdy roof, gendered privileges, men's rights of agency—such as they are—severed by colonial domination? Is it possible that the will to unity which animates anticolonial nationalism is radically perverse? That it is principally a desire for the return of the repressive: the repressive reunion of mutually reinforcing regimes of "social truth" in the service of the power and privileges of men; the repressive

return of that “reciprocal justification” of authority in the homestead and in the public realm of which “the colonial structure is the very negation”; the negation of this negation? If this is so, then the story of women’s transformation, the story of women’s decolonization, cannot take the generic and official narrative of decolonization as normative without serious questions and major revisions. For if the demands of revolutionary terror bring the woman into the public space of heroic action and institute an unprecedented relationship of mutual recognition between male and female, if she is thereby unveiled as a free citizen-warrior, she must wage another battle of the veil at home: home, repository of man’s ancient sovereignty and refuge of colonized man’s offended pride. True, Fanon sometimes sounds as if there is a simple continuity between these two orders of experience, continuity between what the young Marx called “political emancipation” as distinct from “human emancipation”—as if the dismantling of “restrictions” in an embattled public sphere entailed the removal of all structures of domination, at home and everywhere:

All these restrictions were to be knocked over and challenged by the national liberation struggle. The unveiled Algerian woman, who assumed an increasingly important place in revolutionary action, developed her personality, discovered the exalting realm of responsibility. The freedom of the Algerian people from then on became identified with woman’s liberation, with her entry into history . . . This woman who was writing the heroic pages of Algerian history was, in so doing, bursting the bounds of the narrow world in which she had lived without responsibility, and was participating at one and the same time in the destruction of colonialism and the birth of the new woman (SR, 92–93; DC, 107).

Fanon’s own text, however, challenges this joyous celebration of the simultaneous birth of the new citizen and the “new woman.” It will have to admit that to envision and undertake the reinvention of gender relations in the homestead is to push the project of decolonization toward the most exacting, because postnationalist, imperatives; it is indeed to ask of that project to be open to moral consequences of its own claims not yet brought to conscious expression: “unexpressed values [*des valeurs inédites*] governing new relations between the sexes” (SR, 94; 109: RT).

At this point, Fanon’s critical vision exhibits the duality which Paul

Ricoeur considers native to the interpretation of experience. His hermeneutics of suspicion, his detection of gender (and class) interests at the heart of the politics of decolonization, reveals itself to be at the same time a hermeneutics of retrieval—the confrontation of a discourse or a project with its unthought, perhaps unthinkable, yet most radically compelling possibilities. Fanon will continue to pry into the rhetoric of common destiny in order to divulge the promptings of a partisan will to power. Still, he wants to ask: What would the project of decolonization look like if its protagonists took to heart the principal indictment against racial and colonial subjugation—namely, that it violates “the independence of persons”—and if they embarked upon a work of transformation adequate to this critical discourse (SR, 48–49; DC, 65)? The vision of women’s independence, the vision of integral emancipation, is the outcome of this call and response between skepticism and heretical hope. If the “doctrine of the Revolution,” manifestly masculine as it was, gave no thought to woman’s story of freedom, its informing radical impulse is ultimately the quest for the “independence of persons.” Fanon honors and recalls this radical impulse when he evokes and vindicates, as a heretical consequence of the project of decolonization, the process by which woman “*forged a new place for herself by her sheer strength*” (SR, 94; DC, 109; emphasis is Fanon’s). For he sees in the woman as she reorders lived space in the homestead a harbinger of a new kind of independence, a new formation of moral subjectivity—in a word, a realm of freedom available to all, women no less than men. But what are the enabling historical conditions for this regeneration of the moral subject, and what are some of its signal attributes?

We have elicited from Fanon’s narrative the confessional observation that, for all-male nationalism, the reunion of familial and civil orders of authority is a consummation devoutly to be wished. It is precisely this desire for the restoration of the *ancien régime* which is doomed to be frustrated by radical changes in roles, rules, and relations experienced by the family. Although the immediate occasion of these changes is wartime emergency, Fanon suggests that as a context of moral judgment and conduct it is a paradigm *in extremis* of the postcolonial condition. From the experience of a community which because it is faced with “the gravest dangers” knows the worth of each and every individual, the postcolonial world will inherit

"modern forms of existence" and learn to "confer the maximum importance upon the person" (SR, 102; DC, 116: RT).

The context is that of the inescapable disarray of moral authority, particularly as embodied in the family and the father's "sovereignty." The legacy of the emergency is that such a structure of authority cannot hold. For not only those who join the *maquis* but also those who stay home are called upon to make the weightiest and most irrevocable personal decisions free from the father's dictation. The cohesiveness of the family as a moral community is assaulted by the colonial regime's repressive policies, including the forced evacuation of hamlets or "regroupment" of populations. Fanon describes an irreparable crisis in the affective and cognitive foundations of social bonding at its most immediate and intimate level: "With these considerable shifts in population, the whole social panorama and the perceptual framework are disturbed and restructured . . . The regrouped *mechta* [hamlet] is a broken, destroyed *mechta*. It is merely a group of men, women and children. Under these conditions, no gesture is kept intact. No previous rhythm is to be found unaltered" (SR, 103; DC, 117). In these abrupt movements and enforced processes of fragmentation, Fanon sees the auspicious dispersal of the collectivity.

An auspicious dispersal because it enables the emergence of a version of moral agency and obligation more significant and enduring for the woman than what she gains in her capacity as citizen-warrior. For while action in the *maquis* precipitates the desperate intersubjectivity of man and women, while it is first and foremost the occasion for the transformation of their roles, it is in the family bereft of its former cohesion that a revolution in the moral status of the person is engendered.

The most important point of this modification, it seems to us, is that the family, from being homogeneous and virtually monolithic, has broken up into separate elements. Each member of this family has gained in individuality what it has lost in its belonging to a world of more or less confused values. Individual persons have found themselves facing new choices, new decisions. The customary and highly structured patterns of behaviour that were the crystallization of received truths suddenly proved ineffective and were abandoned. Tradition, in fact, is not solely a combination of auto-

matic gestures and archaic beliefs. *At the most elementary level, there are values, and the need for justification. The father questioned by the child explains, comments, legitimates.* (SR, 83-84; DC, 99-100; my emphasis: RT)

The significance of the "modification" described here is threefold. There is, first, the appearance of the person as an independent being, with an identity and moral worth all her own. Second, this independent being is not only the source of moral judgment; she is also the origin and originator of moral authority. Or as Fanon's Nietzschean hyperbole later puts it: "The person is born, assumes autonomy, and becomes a creator of her own values" (SR, 85; DC, 101; RT). Third, this independent subject relates to all moral ordinances, both those she creates and those embedded in "tradition," as *values*, injunctions that require legitimation before other moral subjects. Therein lies, Fanon suggests, the liberating modernity of the moral life augured by the dispersal of meaning in the fledgling postcolonial society. We have here a revolution not only in who is to count as a moral legislator and what is to count as right or wrong, but more profoundly in the very nature of moral discourse: in the fact that ethical statements and principles of action are to be rationally justified by virtue of a dialogical encounter among autonomous interlocutors.

We need to dwell on this last point. Fanon is identifying the generation of personal autonomy with a linguistic event, with a dramatic change in the kind of sentences which the postcolonial subject will henceforth utter and hear as adequate expressions of moral judgments. The modification of roles, relations, and rules Fanon describes affects the modal form of moral discourse: ethical statements are no longer categorical edicts but utterances that by their very grammatical structure invite disputation and legitimation.⁶⁵ This means that there is something more at stake than equity among agents of moral discourse. It is not simply a question of women and men (and even children) being equally empowered to assert moral preferences. It is not, that is to say, simply a question of the *democratization* of moral discourse construed as the dismantling of communicative "relations based on the absolute respect due to the father and on the principle that the truth is first of all the unchallengeable property of the elders." Nor does the change Fanon have in mind

coincide with the *individualization* of moral knowledge, with the fact that “the truth, for once, eluded its traditional trustees and placed itself within reach of any seeker,” independently of the group as an epistemic community (SR, 85–86; DC, 101–102). These achievements would be significant enough, and Fanon effusively applauds what they entail for women, their harbingers and immediate beneficiaries: “The men’s words were no longer law. The women were no longer silent” (SR, 94; DC, 109; RT). But it is in the transformation of the language of ethical life, in the recasting of sentences embodying moral judgments into the dialogical mode, sentences uttered and heard by interlocutors who expect and demand reasoned justifications of prescriptions and proscriptions—it is in this change that Fanon sees the liberating dawn of “modern forms of existence.”

Of the democratization and individualization of moral judgment heralded by the upsurge of the daughters’ speech at the patriarchs’ hearth, Fanon says that it signals “the defeat of the father,” evidence of his “collapsed sovereignty” (SR, 89–90; DC, 104–105). We will appreciate the full measure of the father’s defeat if we recognize in it not only the end of *his* epistemic autocracy but also the beginning of a new day in ways of knowing, judging, and speaking. For if the death of the colonizer enables the return of productive forces and principles of action into the nation’s hands, the defeat of the father frees human agency at the “most elementary level” of existence. That Fanon, allegedly an apologist for the nation’s “totalizing” impulse, locates the birth of the autonomous subject in the private sphere no less than in the public realm, that he equates it with a revolution in the grammar of moral discourse, and that he makes woman its founding figure and firstling, is news. It is as if he wanted, as a countervailing force to that centripetal impulse, to erect upon the ruins of the father’s “collapsed sovereignty” a matriloal confederacy of moral subjects in postcolonial society. All the concrete transformations in relations between women and men narrated and celebrated by Fanon—from consent in the sexual act and equity in the conjugal bond, to the liberalization of divorce practices and procedures—all these changes have as their enabling condition the regeneration of human agency consequent upon the auspicious crisis in the language of moral conduct spoken in the elementary sphere of human existence.

If the people, women and men, are to build anew a homestead of

freedom and community, they will have to do so, Fanon tells us, in the aftermath of a history which at once renders them “objectively dispersed” and gathers them together “beneath a single sign” (SR, 106; DC, 120: RT). Yet what is a community of the free but the home we imagine and undertake to found, impelled by separations and common destinies not of our own choosing?

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A final review of these discourses and practices will not be out of place here: the inaugural image of a social world founded, as a result of an act of racial conquest, on the absolute antinomy of two terms—colonizer and colonized—which are consequently lodged in two spatially delimited zones of existence; the reactive “metaphysics” of an anticolonialist struggle for which the question of social division and solidarity is equally a matter of race, such that the good and the true are simply properties and predicates of racial membership; the derivative practice of a nationalism insistent on the vindication and enforcement of unity and collective identity at the expense of real opposition, internal antagonisms, and irreducible difference; the resuscitation, in the teeth of racialized nationalism’s “carnival” of unanimity and repression of dissent, of a disruptive knowledge of class, but in a historical context in which, thanks to the ambiguity of the material and moral status of class agents, this humanizing and enlightening knowledge issues in aporetic consequences: emblematic signs of resurgent complications in the story of experience that demand of postcolonial humanity the work of political judgment; and, finally, the realization that for all the decisive recognition of difference it signals, not even the politics of class—such as it is—quite addresses the specific gravity of women’s condition both as a common human predicament and as it relates specifically to the prospects of the postcolonial subject’s transformation into a modern democratic citizen and moral agent.

A normative narrative generated by the principal indictment against colonialism informs Fanon’s judgment of the structures of experience just reviewed: “Yesterday they were completely denied responsibility; today they mean to understand everything and make all decisions.” The case against racial and colonial bondage is that it radically violates “the independence of persons.” This is Fanon’s testimony. On the strength of that testimony and the normative narrative it generates, he asks us to hold the postcolonial order to a principle of coherence. Starkly stated, Fanon’s message is that the moral credibility of the fight against the white man, the legitimacy of the postcolonial age, the justice of transactions among its citizenry and of the forms of governance under which they live—all this rests on the degree to which the independence of persons is honored. At a minimum, it rests on the forthrightness with which indigenous forms of domination and injustice are divulged, and the resoluteness with which they are dismantled. Measured by that yardstick, the

history of postcolonial societies in the African world is a history of unspeakable disaster.

The omens of catastrophe were all too visible as Fanon composed his last and best-known work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, and were indeed registered with the horror and revulsion they deserved in his parting words. Yet he took upon himself the obligation of the critical imagination to register another truth, that of the vision of things not yet done. So it is that in full knowledge of a momentous enterprise of human regeneration gone awry, Fanon insisted not only on recording the "tragic mishaps" and dispiriting "travesty" of that enterprise, but also on recalling what might have been, what might still be. In the arid earth of prematurely withered hopes, he insisted on discerning the seedlings of what his teacher Aimé Césaire called "the yet undared form."¹ Even as the fledgling postcolonial order showed, in the character of its predatory and profligate chieftains, eloquent signs of "precocious senility," Fanon could in all seriousness describe decolonization as an absolute beginning, a *tabula rasa* in historical experience, an epic of origination rather than a tragic farce of repetition.

In so doing, Fanon described the nature of his own narrative mission. For he is one of those "rememberers" of Ayi Kwei Armah's mythopoetics who, while they are not exactly austere votaries of the eternal, are nonetheless no mere chroniclers of the "senseless present."² Rather, Fanon brings to the final statement of his dialectic of experience what Aristotle characterized as the function of the poet, as distinct from that of the historian: "to describe not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen."³ Yet Fanon would not make this poetic vocation his individual idiosyncrasy, the private prepossession of the solitary dreamer. A radical democratic humanism compels him to see this faculty of beginning, as Hannah Arendt was fond of calling it, as a human commonality. That in part is why, even when he is in truth enjoining on us a commitment to the practice of starting anew—as in those opening sentences of *The Wretched of the Earth*—he speaks with innocuous duplicity in the indicative mood rather than the forlorn optatives of the solitary dreamer or the tyrannizing imperatives of the moral legislator. For he credits the imagination of postcolonial humanity with the power to relive the condition of a mind unformed, the capacity to cleanse itself of the detritus of history and to write for itself a fresh destiny as on a *tabula rasa*. Such is the measure of Fanon's generosity, but

also of his tenacious adherence to the principle of hope. Under their aegis he is able to invoke, in the guise of a descriptive report, the prospect of a renewal yet to be undertaken.

To vindicate this vision of regeneration, Fanon, to the chagrin of his future postmodernist critics, resorts to a foundationalism that is at once anamnestic and prophetic. Anamnestic because it seeks to retrieve "the permanent values of human reality," to remember the pristine promises of "human things" with which to "feast the eyes" of a resurgent people as the challenge of their strivings. Prophetic because, thanks to the thoroughness with which the history of all hitherto existing society has demolished all enacted essences; thanks to the brutal consistency with which, Fanon acidly noted—and he speaks specifically of the West—concrete and palpable human beings have been mercilessly violated at the very moment the idea of humanity was being solemnly invoked; thanks to the battering to which the "destiny of being" (in Soyinka's words) has been subjected, these foundations, understood as excellences of human existence and association, have always been contested possibilities: harried survivals salvaged from the strivings of the past for the judgment of things as they are in the name of things as they might be.

By the end of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon has left us in no doubt whatsoever that he knows the history of the West, the experience of the postcolonial world, and the collective story of humanity much too well to speak blithely of human universals, even as sheer possibilities. A troika of terror, these intertwined histories had, for him, conspired to fashion a record from which the humanity of human beings could hardly be recollected in the tranquillity of ontological descriptions. How could he fail to be instructed by this record of humanity without a human face? How could he fail to be enlightened by the dehumanizing consequences of the humanist mission of the Enlightenment—consequences endured in their gravest forms by those peoples who, because they were decreed stunted or deviant, bore witness to the full and unrestrained violence of the modern Western project? Yet Fanon could not quite bring himself to embrace the indiscriminate misanthropy of those who only know of this violence either by hearsay or in the vastly chastened versions visited upon the bodies and souls of kith and kin. History's unsparing pathologist, trained as he was to listen with suspicion to all professions of transcendental knowledge of human essences, Fanon would nevertheless have stopped short of assenting to the post-Foucauldian

dogma—the new agnostic’s creed—according to which the good is inexpressible. For educated yet undaunted by the recurrent record of humanity without a human face, Fanon seems to say to us that without remembering the possibility of that human face, we are condemned to renounce our capacity to make the most compelling distinctions, beginning with the distinction between true and false decolonization, the distinction between what is and what might have been.

Today, as the African world searches for new ways to recover the promise of freedom and community squandered in three blighted decades of postcolonial existence, it may not be fruitless to recall Fanon’s vision of what might have been. For surely, somewhere in the unconquered regions of our living memory, that vision—no less ours than the desolation he surveyed and recorded with livid anguish—still lives. It must still live.

NOTES

INDEX

NOTES

PROLOGUE

1. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 269. See also Said's talk of "the shattering novelty of Fanon's inclusive vision," in idem, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," *Critical Inquiry* 15 (Winter 1989): 224.
2. Kenneth Mostern, "Decolonization as Learning: Practice and Pedagogy in Frantz Fanon's Revolutionary Narrative," in Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren, eds., *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 252, 268.
3. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993). Gilroy does not discuss Fanon in his book, but he calls Fanon and C. L. R. James "the two best-known black Atlantic thinkers." Ibid., p. xi.
4. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Brace and World, 1969), p. 71; Ashis Nandy, *Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 33-34; Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), pp. 137-153; Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 65.
5. Yves Bénot, "Ethique et politique chez Cabral et Fanon," *Chemins Critiques* 2, no. 1 (1991): 115-129; Hussein M. Adam, "Frantz Fanon as a Democratic Theorist," *African Affairs* 92 (1993): 499-518. Tsenay Serequeberhan goes even further and gives Fanon's work a metaphilosophical status. In his attempt to "appropriate and indigenize" the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics for the interpretation of "contemporary African existence and thought," he sees Fanon (together with Cabral) as a paradigmatic figure. See Tsenay Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 3, 4, 118. Sereque-

- berhan's evaluation of Fanon is the exact opposite of Irene Gendzier's, according to which Fanon was not even "philosophically inclined." See Gendzier, *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study* (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 22.
6. Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *Radical Philosophy: Tradition, Counter-Tradition, Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).
 7. Ato Sekyi-Otu, "Form and Metaphor in Fanon's Critique of Racial and Colonial Domination," in Alkis Kontos, ed., *Domination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. 133-161.
 8. Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon*, pp. 73-74, 195.
 9. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 12 [*Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952), pp. 27-28]. References to Fanon's works are henceforth given in the text unless otherwise stated. In each case, the French text is cited first, followed by the English translation. Titles of both French and English texts are abbreviated as indicated in the frontmatter. "RT" after citations of English texts means "revised translation."
 10. Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact: Fanon's Clinical Psychology and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 63-81, 107.
 11. This is my rendition of "L'expérience vécue du noir," the title of the fifth chapter of *Peau noire, masques blancs*, translated by Markmann as "The Fact of Blackness."
 12. Homi K. Bhabha, "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition," foreword to Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto, 1986), p. xii.
 13. In his analysis of domination, Fanon would have to plead guilty to that antipsychologism bemoaned by Ashis Nandy. It does not follow that he would have to plead guilty to the simple-minded belief according to which "the impact of political and economic inequality is skin-deep and short-term. Remove the inequality and oppression . . . and you will have healthy individuals and healthy societies all around." See Nandy, *Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias*, p. 25. In a much-criticized essay, Fredric Jameson adumbrates the distinction missing from Nandy's straw man: recognition of the psychological aspects and effects of domination and "subalternity" exemplified "most dramatically in the experience of colonized peoples," and a refusal to embrace a psychologistic reductionism which obscures the determination of psychic structures by "economic and political relationships." There is a Fanonist truth to Jameson's observations. Fanon's position on this is, of course, radically contextualist: it is addressed to the relationship between psychic and sociopolitical structures in the colonial situation. It thus makes no claims, as Jameson appears to do, about the fundamental absence

in so-called Third-World societies of "a radical split between the private and the public, between the poetic and the political, between what we have come to think of as the domain of sexuality and the unconscious and that of the public world of classes, of the economic, and of secular political power: in other words, Freud versus Marx." As for the inference Jameson draws from his observations with such imperial authority—namely, that "all third-world texts . . . are to be read as *national allegories*"—that, too, is another matter. See Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (Fall 1986): 76, 69.

14. Bhabha, "Remembering Fanon," p. xiii.
15. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 20.

I. REREADING FANON

1. Homi K. Bhabha, "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition," foreword to Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto, 1986), pp. xxii, xxv.
2. Ibid., p. xxv.
3. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Critical Fanonism," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Spring 1991), p. 468.
4. Ibid., p. 459. For a spirited critique of Gates and other recent readings of Fanon, see Cedric Robinson, "The Appropriation of Frantz Fanon," *Race and Class* 35, no. 1 (1993): 79-91.
5. Ayi Kwei Armah, "African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?" *Présence Africaine* 64 (1967): 29-30.
6. This paragraph appeared in an earlier version in my essay "The African Context of the Battle of Azania: National Liberation as Social Revolution?" in Simeon W. Chilungu and Sada Niang, *African Continuities / L'héritage africain* (Toronto: Terebi, 1989), p. 53.
7. Kenneth A. Megill, *The New Democratic Theory* (New York: Free Press, 1970), p. 83.
8. Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right,"* ed. Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 27, 29.
9. Aimé Césaire, *Letter to Maurice Thorez* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1956), pp. 6, 15.
10. Norman O. Brown, *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 121.
11. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 19.
12. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writ-*

- ings, 1972-1979, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 81.
13. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* (New York: Schocken, 1968), p. 205.
 14. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 134.
 15. Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Press, 1983).
 16. Sharon D. Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985), p. 80.
 17. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, trans. S. W. Allen (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1948), pp. 41, 64-65.
 18. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), pp. 209-210.
 19. Ato Sekyi-Otu, "Form and Metaphor in Fanon's Critique of Racial and Colonial Domination," in Alkis Kontos, ed., *Domination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. 133-161; and idem, "Frantz Fanon's Critique of the Colonial Experience" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1977).
 20. P. Nursey-Bray, "Marxism and Existentialism in the Thought of Frantz Fanon," *Political Studies* 20, no. 2 (June 1972): 152-168.
 21. According to Nursey-Bray, Fanon considered race to be "a major determinant, if not the major determinant, in the evolution of society." Ibid., p. 153.
 22. Such is Irene Gendzier's reading in *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study* (New York: Pantheon, 1973), pp. 45-60.
 23. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 51.
 24. Even the allegedly more orthodox Marxist Amílcar Cabral adumbrated a differentiation of "colonial history" from "our history as human societies." See Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea* (London: Stage 1, 1969), p. 56. This differentiation is indeed present in Fanon as a critical, indeed polemical, narrative strategy; it is, however, challenged by a rival and complementary plot: the predication of the story of colonial bondage upon what Patrick Taylor has called the "narrative of liberation." My original reading of Fanon was insufficiently attentive to this irrepressible presence of the mythos of human freedom in Fanon's text—indeed in the colonial experience. See Patrick M. Taylor, *The Narrative of Liberation: Perspectives on Afro-Caribbean Literature, Popular Culture and Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).
 25. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), p. 36.
 26. Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity*, p. 74.
 27. I am referring to the kind of "radical historicism" defined and defended by

- Cornel West in *The Ethical Dimensions of Marxist Thought* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991).
28. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1977), p. 280.
29. Such a sequential reading is evident in L. Adele Jinadu, *Fanon: In Search of the African Revolution* (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980).
30. Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet On Creation Day* (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 15.
31. Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966–1978* (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 35.
32. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 15, 49.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 58; David Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 55.
34. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 55.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
38. Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 146.
39. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1959), p. 158.
40. Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, p. 118.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 116, 143.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 125–126.
45. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 10.
46. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 114–115.
47. Marx, *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right,"* p. 40.
48. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 57. For a different reading of Hegel—one that, following Kojève, stresses the openness of Hegel's account of Spirit's becoming, and so sees a stronger affinity between Hegel and Fanon—see Taylor, *The Narrative of Liberation*, pp. 23–25. I follow David Kolb's argument that the openness of the story of Spirit is not unlimited. According to Kolb, the *Logic* explicates the conceptual necessities that impose “a finite set of possibilities” upon Spirit's becoming and govern its manifestations (*The Critique of Pure Modernity*, p. 79).
49. Fanon, “The Reciprocal Basis of National Cultures and the Struggle for Liberation,” *Présence Africaine* 24–25 (February–May 1959), p. 89. This is the original version of the text included in the fourth chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*.

50. Taylor, *The Narrative of Liberation*, p. 25.
51. Christopher L. Miller, *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 50-51.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-64.
54. Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), pp. 143-226.
55. Miller, *Theories of Africans*, p. 63.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 87.
58. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 148.
59. Miller, *Theories of Africans*, pp. 48-50, 54.
60. I borrow the phrase "final vocabulary" from Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 73.
61. Yambo Ouloguem, *Bound to Violence*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 33.
62. Analogous to the "labor theory of cause" that Carol C. Gould ascribes to Marx in *Marx's Social Ontology: Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978), pp. 69-100.
63. Miller, *Theories of Africans*, p. 56.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
65. *Ibid.*
66. I am referring to Soyinka's *Ogun Abibiman* (London: Rex Collings, 1976).
67. Miller, *Theories of Africans*, p. 59.
68. *Ibid.*
69. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 114.
70. Miller, *Theories of Africans*, p. 50.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.
72. Jack Woddis, *New Theories of Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), p. 43.
73. Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact: Fanon's Critical Psychology and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 158, 204.
74. Bhabha, "Remembering Fanon," pp. ix, x, xii, xxi. See also Benita Parry's description of Bhabha's reading of Fanon as a "premature poststructuralist," in "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," *Oxford Literary Review* 9, nos. 1-2 (1987): 27-58, p. 31. Robert Young is equally convinced that Fanon was theoretically antihumanist in the postmodernist mold: *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 121-125. While Bhabha and Young are busy promoting Fanon as a premature or precocious postmodernist, Molefe Kete Asante applauds

- Fanon as "an Afrocentric precursor." According to Asante, Fanon's work "bears an essentialist, abstract character . . . Fanon speaks without ambiguity about 'the black,' 'the white,' 'bourgeoisie,' 'colonized,' and 'peasant.'" See Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1990), pp. 180, 177.
75. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 303.
 76. Homi K. Bhabha, "Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," in Francis Barker, ed., *The Politics of Theory* (Colchester, England: University of Essex Press, 1983), pp. 194-211; idem, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (Spring 1984): 125-133; and idem, "Freedom's Basis in the Indeterminate," *October* 61 (Summer 1992): 48-57.
 77. Miller, *Theories of Africans*, p. 50.

2. IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE

1. Francis Jeanson, "Préface" to Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952) p. 22.
2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), pp. 82, 84.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.
5. It would be left to Jean-Paul Sartre to reinstate "the very fact of conquest" into the fabric of historical materialism, specifically in his account of colonialism and the relations between the colonizers and the colonized. Sartre writes: "Of course, the conquest of Algeria in itself can only be taken as a complex process dependent on a certain political and social situation *in France* as well as on the real relations between capitalist France and agricultural, feudal Algeria. Nevertheless, the colonial wars of the nineteenth century *realised* an original situation of violence for the colonialists as their fundamental relation to the natives; and this situation of violence produces and reproduces itself as the outcome of a collection of violent practices, that is to say, of intentional operations with precise aims, carried out by the army—as a group-institution—and by economic groups supported by public authority (by delegates of the metropolitan sovereign)." See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: NLB, 1976), pp. 733, 714.
6. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1979*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 112.

7. Hayden White, "The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation," in W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *The Politics of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 142.
8. This absolutely decisive phrase, with all its unmistakable Hegelian resonances, is rendered as "at close quarters" in Constance Farrington's translation.
9. On this, see Nancy C. M. Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism," in Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka, eds., *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1983), pp. 283-310; Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), ch. 6; idem, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity?'" in Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, eds., *Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 49-82; and Bat-Ami Bar On, "Marginality and Epistemic Privilege," in Alcoff and Potter, eds., *Feminist Epistemologies*, pp. 83-100.
10. Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Sussex: Harvester, 1983), p. 370.
11. Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, trans. Henri Evans (London: Hutchinson, 1983).
12. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 58.
13. Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?* trans. Bernard Frechtman (London: Methuen, 1967), pp. 23-24, my emphasis. See also Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, pp. 66, 713.
14. Hayden White sees a connection between apprehensions of history as a meaningless terror and "visionary politics." White, "The Politics of Historical Interpretation," p. 134.
15. Karl Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p. 88.
16. G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 304.
17. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 112.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 114.
20. Ibid., pp. 114-115.
21. Ibid., p. 116.
22. Ibid., pp. 116-117.
23. Ibid., p. 117.
24. Ibid., p. 119.

25. Trent Schroyer, *The Critique of Domination* (New York: George Braziller, 1973), pp. 96-97.
26. Renate Zahar, *L'oeuvre de Frantz Fanon*, trans. from the German by Roger Dangeville (Paris: Maspero, 1970), pp. 86-87.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
28. Irene Gendzier, *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study* (New York: Pantheon, 1973), p. 26.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, p. 272.
31. William Leon McBride, "Sartre and the Phenomenology of Social Violence," in James M. Edie, ed., *New Essays in Phenomenology* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969), pp. 290-313, 321.
32. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1969), pp. 324-328.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 328-339.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 553.
35. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 149.
36. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 555.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 339, 529.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 358.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 340-400.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 353, 384, 365.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 382.
42. Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, p. 116.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-100; and Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 272ff.
47. Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, pp. 127-128.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.
50. Charles Lam Markham translates this chapter's title as "The Fact of Blackness."
51. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 555.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 537-547.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 541, 545.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 545, 546.
55. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Vintage, 1963), p. 91.
56. Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 54-55.

57. See Sartre's introduction to Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. xviii.
58. *Ibid.*, p. xxix.
59. In 1967, Josie Fanon (Fanon's widow, then living in Algeria) would order the removal of Sartre's preface from subsequent publications of *Les damnés de la terre* by Maspero, because of Sartre's support of Israel in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The preface reappears in a 1991 edition of *Les damnés de la terre* published by Gallimard.
60. Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, pp. 714–733.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 713, 734.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 717.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 715.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 736.
65. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, trans. S. W. Allen (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1948), pp. 7–8.
66. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 384.
67. This critique of the principle of dialectical contradiction which Fanon's texts stage as a situational and strategic necessity has found a systematic epistemological statement in Lucio Colletti, "Marxism and the Dialectic," *New Left Review* 93 (September–October 1975): 3–29. For a differentiation of the logic of antagonism from the concepts of contradiction and opposition, see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, trans. Winston Moore and Paul Cammack (London: Verso, 1985), pp. 93–148.
68. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 70. In his recent work, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990), Ernesto Laclau goes so far as to oppose the spatial to the political. Fanon would have shared Laclau's interest in the "analysis of forms of exclusion which have historically provided the conditions for the construction of a pure spatiality" (p. 69). The "colonial context" and its quintessential form, apartheid, would of course be for Fanon the paradigm case of systems of exclusion and "pure spatiality." But it is doubtful that Fanon would have asserted starkly with Laclau that "politics and space are antinomic terms. Politics only exist insofar as the spatial eludes us" (p. 68). As we shall presently see, Fanon distinguishes the radically antipolitical, "totalitarian" "geographical ordering" of existence definitive of apartheid colonialism from what, following existentialist ontology, he regards as the irreducible spatiality of human existence.
69. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1969), p. 53.
70. On this, see Carol C. Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology: Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978), pp. 61–62.

71. Karl Marx, *Wages, Price and Profit*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), p. 219; and idem, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 708.
72. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 172.
73. Ibid., p. 168.
74. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), p. 190.
75. Ibid., p. 184.
76. Ibid., p. 52.
77. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 168.
78. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 90.
79. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 181.
80. Ibid., p. 209.
81. Ibid., p. 192.
82. This is David McLellan's rendition in his translation and edition of *The Grundrisse* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 142.
83. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 213.
84. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 706.
85. Ibid., p. 708.
86. Michael A. Weinstein, "Coercion, Space, and the Modes of Human Domination," in J. Roland Pennock and John Chapman, eds., *NOMOS 14: Coercion* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972), pp. 65-66.
87. Ibid., p. 70.
88. Eugène Minkowski, *Lived Time*, trans. Nancy Metzal (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 400.
89. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 362, 424-425.
90. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 293.
91. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 432.
92. Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, p. 307.
93. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 138-148.
94. Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1971), p. 31.
95. Ibid., pp. 33-35.
96. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 85.
97. Ibid., pp. 98ff.
98. Ibid., p. 100.
99. Homi K. Bhabha, "Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," in Francis Barker, ed., *The Politics of Theory* (Colchester, England: University of Essex Press, 1983), p. 207.
100. Esteve Morera, *Gramsci's Historicism: A Realist Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 161.

101. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 39, 121. See also idem, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978).
102. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Brace and World, 1969), p. 71. Indeed, and quite ironically, Fanon's grim portrait of a totalitarian administration of difference fixed in space—the extreme case of negative spatiality—derives its force from a tacit normative conception of the *public space* as the realm of freedom and action available to equal citizens, which Arendt so eloquently celebrates in *The Human Condition*, for example. The colonial-racial regime of space is, on this view, the radical opposite of Arendt's picture of the public realm and the Aristotelian ideal of the political community from which that picture is derived. According to that ideal, "The members of a political association aim by their very nature at being equal and differing in nothing" (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1259b). In following "the principle of reciprocal exclusivity," the colonial-racial system obeys "the rules of pure Aristotelian logic," but in so doing it fundamentally violates the Aristotelian norm of political association; in short, it is a regime of violence. It is thus on Arendtian and neo-Aristotelian grounds that Fanon dramatizes the violence of the colonial order and anticolonialist insurrection. To see him as an anthropologist or, worse still, as an apostle of violence is to miss the point entirely. For while Fanon would have recognized in the colonial-racial system a paradigm case of what Jean-François Lyotard calls *différend*, or "agonal contest"—that is "a conflict between (at least) two parties which cannot properly be decided due to the absence of a decision rule applicable to both sides of the argument"—he would for that very reason (i.e., the absence of what "Concerning Violence" describes as "a common standard of truth") have refused to see the colonial-racial system as a form of political association. See Lyotard, *Le Différend* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1983), cited in Fred Dallmayr, *Margins of Political Discourse* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 13–14.
103. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 252.
104. Ibid.
105. I have altered Charles Lam Markmann's rendition of "Le Noir et le langage" ("The Negro and Language").
106. Johann Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 192.
107. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in *Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, ed. A. A. Brill (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 914. In the course of his "description of human space" in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty says in a very suggestive footnote that "the dance evolves in an aimless and unoriented space, . . . it is a suspension of our history, . . . in the dance the subject and his world are no longer in opposition" (*Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 287, n. 4).

108. Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* (St. Louis, Mo.: Telos Press, 1975), p. 139.
109. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 361.
110. I am here collapsing the doctrine of the Divided Line in Book VI of Plato's *Republic* with the Allegory of the Cave, which follows in Book VII.
111. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: New American Library, 1969; orig. pub. 1903), p. 54.
112. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* (New York: Schocken, 1968; orig. pub. 1940), p. 130.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
114. Christopher Fyfe, "Race, Empire and the Historians," *Race and Class* 33, no. 4 (1992), pp. 27–28.

3. BEWILDERING ENLIGHTENMENT

1. On the problematic relations between dialectic and narrative—to say nothing of the postmodernist suspicion of their mutual complicity in repressive discourse—see the essays in Thomas R. Flynn and Dalia Judovitz, eds., *Dialectic and Narrative* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); in particular, James I. Porter, "Helen and the Rape of Narrative: The Politics of Dissuasion," and Candace D. Lang, "Narrative, Dialectic, and Irony in Jameson and White."
2. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution," in *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 244.
3. Francis Jeanson, "Préface" to Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952), p. 20.
4. Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 697.
5. For a recent attempt to surmount the universalism-particularism antinomy, see Ernesto Laclau, "Universalism, Particularism, and the Question of Identity," *October* 61 (Summer 1992): 83–90.
6. Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, trans. Henri Evans (London: Hutchinson, 1983).
7. Thus Jack Woddis, *New Theories of Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), p. 26; Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact: Fanon's Critical Psychology and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), ch. 6.
8. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, trans. Winston Moore and Paul Cammack (London: Verso, 1985).
9. Jacques Derrida's famous description of Hegel in *Of Grammatology*, trans.

- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 26.
10. Biodun Jeyifo, "Wole Soyinka and the Tropes of Disalienation," Introduction to Wole Soyinka, *Art, Dialogue and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture* (Ibadan, Nigeria: New Horn Press, 1988), p. xxix.
 11. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 15.
 12. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *A Grain of Wheat* (London: Heinemann, 1967).
 13. Constance Farrington renders Fanon's phrase *voluntarisme spectaculaire* as "spectacular volunteer movement," and thereby misses Fanon's implicit criticism of forms of consciousness and action spawned by survivals of the standpoint of immediacy.
 14. Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 65.
 15. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic: Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), p. 53.
 16. It is possible to see in this concluding section of "Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness" a revolutionary version of the marriage of hermeneutics, practical reason, and politics discussed by Richard J. Bernstein in *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), pp. 38–45.
 17. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp. 130–132.
 18. *Ibid.*, in particular pp. 52–132.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 201.
 20. I am alluding here to Hegel's thesis according to which "the harmoniousness of childhood is a gift from the hand of nature: the second harmony must spring from the labour and culture of the spirit." See *The Science of Logic*, p. 43.
 21. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), p. 379.
 22. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), p. 267.
 23. Fredric Jameson, "A Brief Response," *Social Text* 17 (Fall 1987): 26–27.
 24. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 5–39, for an account of the humanist notion of *common sense*, its philosophical antecedents, and political significance.
 25. See Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, pp. 60, 182, and 325, where the "corporate or economistic" is juxtaposed with the "universal." Gramsci takes linguistic competence—speaking a dialect as opposed to knowing "the national language"—as the paradigm case.

26. The title in Fanon's French original of the third chapter of *Les damnés de la terre*. I suggest below that Constance Farrington's rendition of *mésaventures* as "pitfalls" is misleading.
27. Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Making of the Bourgeoisie," *New Left Review* 167 (January–February, 1988).
28. Enzo Paci, *The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man*, trans. Paul Piccone and James E. Hansen (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 335.
29. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 216.
30. Woddis, *New Theories of Revolution*, pp. 35, 84; and McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact*.
31. Consider (among others) Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction*, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), pp. 175–187; Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 158.
32. The reader will recognize in these terms an idiosyncratic use of Emile Durkheim's distinction between "mechanical solidarity" and "organic solidarity." See Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, trans. George Simpson (New York: Free Press, 1969).
33. Constance Farrington's translation of this passage is inaccurate. Fanon writes in the original: "Economiquement impuissante, ne pouvant mettre à jour des relations sociales cohérentes, fondées sur le principe de sa domination en tant que classe, la bourgeoisie choisit . . ." (DT, 108). Farrington's rendition is as follows: "Powerless economically, unable to bring about the existence of coherent social relations, and standing on the principle of its domination as a class, the bourgeoisie chooses . . ." (WE, 164). Farrington's translation makes *fondées* qualify not *relations sociales cohérentes*, as it clearly does, but *la bourgeoisie*, thereby attributing to the "national bourgeoisie" of the colonized world the very power which Fanon denies it—the power to establish itself as an autonomous, hegemonic class. In fact, the passage is synonymous with another statement Fanon makes later (DT, 110; WE, 159): that the national bourgeoisie is "incapable de se constituer en classe," "incapable of constituting itself as a class." This important statement, too, Farrington mistranslates as "incapable of learning its lesson," thereby missing Fanon's crucial differentiation of the bourgeoisie of the colonized world and the "classical" European bourgeoisie.
34. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Text Edition (New York: Academic Press, 1976); and idem, *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
35. Refutations of the thesis of incorrigible dependency and underdevelopment

are now legion. They are often informed by post-Althusserian theories of the *complexity* of social formations, the articulation of modes of production, and the refusal to measure classes in terms of some quintessential properties. For a useful summation of this theoretical critique, see Aidan Foster-Carter, "The Modes of Production Controversy," *New Left Review* 107 (January-February, 1978): 47-77. A theoretical recantation of a previous "underdevelopment" perspective is represented in Colin Leys, "Underdevelopment and Dependency: Critical Notes," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 7, no. 1 (1977): 92-107. And for empirical documentation of accumulation and ascendancy by the African bourgeoisie, see Colin Leys, "Capital Accumulation, Class Formation and Dependency: The Significance of the Kenyan Case," *Socialist Register* (1978): 241-266; Nicola Swainson, *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918-1977* (London: Heinemann, 1980); and Paul Kennedy, *African Capitalism: The Struggle for Ascendancy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). A more guarded account of the national bourgeoisie's prospects is Sayre P. Schatz, *Nigerian Capitalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); and idem, "Pirate Capitalism and the Inert Economy of Nigeria," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 29 (1984): 45-67.

36. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, trans. John Mathews (New York: International Publishers, 1977), pp. 6-7.
37. An allusion to Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat from Class: A New "True" Socialism* (London: Verso, 1986).
38. Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, p. 7.
39. Otto René Castillo (Guatemalan poet), "Report of an Injustice," in Robert Márquez, ed., *Latin American Revolutionary Poetry* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).
40. In giving discursive preeminence to the sphere of distribution, Fanon may be said to have anticipated the theoretical conclusions drawn by Gavin Kitching from his study of class formation in Kenya. Kitching writes: "Whilst the complexities of the Kenyan case make it impossible to utilise the concept of class developed in Volume 1 of *Capital*, in which classes (or rather two classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie) are identified with reference to their diametrically opposite roles within the production process alone, it is possible to develop a Marxist form of class analysis for Kenya (and perhaps for other parts of sub-Saharan Africa too) based on the slightly more inclusive concept of the mode of appropriation of the surplus product. This second level concept of class . . . opens up the possibility of relating class structure to the sphere of circulation in addition to the sphere of production." See Gavin Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of an African Petite Bourgeoisie, 1905-1970* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 450-451.
41. István Mészáros, "Contingent and Necessary Class Consciousness," in

- Mészáros, ed., *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 108.
42. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), p. 41.
43. Karl Marx, *Class Struggles in France* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), p. 43.
44. For these characterizations, see DT, 12, 24, 14, 25, 65, 113, 110, 117; WE, 44, 59, 46, 60, 110, 172, 167, 176.
45. V. I. Lenin, *Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967), p. 46.
46. Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, pp. 89, 78.
47. See Angie Chabram Dernerseian, "I Throw Punches for My Race, but I Don't Want to Be a Man: Writing Us—Chica-nos (Girl, Us)/Chicanas—into the Movement Script," in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, eds. *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 87.
48. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, p. 37.
49. Marx, *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, p. 182.
50. The early Marx employs this phrase in his sardonic examination of the German social formation. See *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction*, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, p. 177. Indeed, in this text Marx disavows the possibility of a dispassionate historicist criticism of "German conditions." The nature of these conditions was such that it deserved "*indignation*." A signal feature of these negative conditions was the absence of a class that because of its "material might" and "breadth of soul" was capable of representing the universal, of enabling "the *revolution of a nation* and the *emancipation of a particular class* of civil society to coincide." In the teeth of this absence, this objective nonexistence of a class that is "truly the social head and the social heart," Marx is constrained to speak of the possibility of an "emancipatory position" in the language of invocation (*ibid.*, pp. 184–186). For a brilliant account of Marx's invocatory language in this text, see Michel Henry, *Marx: A Philosophy of Human Reality*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 54–85. Need we point out that Marx's rhetoric of absence, social retardation, class incapacities, and aborted hegemony prefigures Gramsci's and Fanon's theses?
51. Herbert Marcuse, "The Obsolescence of Marxism," in Nicholas Lobkowicz, ed., *Marx and the Western World* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), p. 417. Needless to say, this affinity between Fanon's and Marcuse's *transcendent critiques* and *deontological idioms* does not imply an identity in their accounts of the social formations upon which the former are predicated. Marcuse argues the invalidation of the classical Marxist concept of revolution by virtue of *transformations* in capitalist

production, class positions, class experience, and class capacities, subsequent to the classical Marxist account of their historical prototypes. Fanon, by contrast, argues the inapplicability of the classical Marxist concept of revolution by virtue of the *congenital aberration* of peripheral capitalism, class positions, class experience, and class capacities from their metropolitan archetypes. For Marcuse's arguments, see, in addition to the above, Marcuse, "Socialism in the Developed Countries," *International Socialist Journal* (April 1965): 139-151; idem, "Ethics and Revolution," in Richard T. De George, ed., *Ethics and Society* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 133-147; idem, "Re-examination of the Concept of Revolution," *Dio- genes* 64 (Winter 1968): 17-25; and idem, "The Concept of Negation in the Dialectic," *Telos* 8 (Summer 1971): 130-132.

52. Aimé Césaire, "The Thoroughbreds," in Césaire, *The Collected Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshelman and Annette Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 99.

4. POLITICAL JUDGMENT

1. I am here borrowing Frank Cunningham's name for those proponents of socialism who envisage the possibility of recuperating central aspects of the liberal-democratic project. See Frank Cunningham, *Democratic Theory and Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 141-167.
2. Fanon as a proponent of some kind of peasant messianism is argued in Lewis A. Coser, "The Myth of Peasant Revolt," in Coser, *Continuities in the Study of Social Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1970), pp. 211-222; Jack Woddis, *New Theories of Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), p. 43; B. Marie Perinbam, "Fanon and the Revolutionary Peasantry: The Algerian Case," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 2 (September 1973): 427-445; idem, *Holy Violence: The Revolutionary Thought of Frantz Fanon* (Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1982), pp. 92-93; Jock McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact: Fanon's Critical Psychology and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 204. According to McCulloch, "The peasant as the noble savage is Fanon's vision of liberation."
3. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); idem, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).
4. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 14.
5. Lloyd Best, "Outlines of a Model of Pure Plantation Economy," *Social and Economic Studies* 17, no. 3 (1968): 283-326.
6. For an account of class position as a function of "social closure" in the form of exclusion, see Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bour-*

- geois *Critique* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), particularly ch. 4.
7. See Bat-Ami Bar On, "Marginality and Epistemic Privilege," in Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, eds., *Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 89.
 8. As does Bat-Ami Bar On for meta-epistemological reasons.
 9. Jack Woddis, *New Theories of Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), p. 74.
 10. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), p. 39.
 11. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1965).
 12. Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 64. The language of this definition of the proletariat by *negation* and in terms of its *exclusion* is virtually indistinguishable from Marx's earlier characterization of the poor in "Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood," Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1975). Erica Sherover has suggested a conceptual continuity between Marx's view of the poor and the subsequent theory of the proletariat. See Sherover, "The Virtue of Poverty: Marx's Transformation of Hegel's Concept of the Poor," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 3, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 53–66. See also William Leiss, "Critical Theory and Its Future," *Political Theory* 2, no. 3 (August 1974).
 13. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 498.
 14. Amílcar Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea* (London: Stage 1, 1969), pp. 48–51.
 15. Woddis, *New Theories of Revolution*, p. 43. Jock McCulloch follows Woddis in this misreading; see *Black Soul, White Artifact*, p. 147.
 16. See Ayi Kwei Armah, "Masks and Marx: The Marxist Ethos vis-à-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis," *Présence Africaine* 131 (1984): 35–65.
 17. Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea*, p. 89.
 18. The reactivation of this "internal pluralism" is at the heart of Paulin Hountondji's critique of "unanimism"; see Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, trans. Henri Evans (London: Hutchinson, 1983), p. 166.
 19. Coser, "The Myth of Peasant Revolt," p. 219.
 20. McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact*. Among the more perverse aspects of McCulloch's interpretation is his persistent conflation of the concept of *national culture*, which Fanon saw as a revolutionary *postcolonial* achievement, with "the familiar idea of a specific black sensibility" and "precolonial culture" (*Black Soul, White Artifact*, pp. 60, 71, and *passim*). Indeed, the central error of McCulloch's study is that it assimilates Fanon's "clinical psychology and social theory" to the *ethnophilosophical project*—the derivation of metaphysics, politics, and aesthetics from an "alternate" "psychol-

ogy of the Negro.” Fanon is said to have berated European “ethnopsychiatry for its failure to make allowances for the need of an alternative psychology of the black” (p. 107). The truth is that Fanon does the exact opposite. He berates European ethnopsychiatry precisely for its ethnophilosophical reductionism, for circumventing the political and historically determinate “psychoexistential” situation of the *colonized*, with this illicit and ideological appeal to the psychology of the race, the “natives,” and the like. This is the burden of Fanon’s polemic against Mannoni in the fourth chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*. McCulloch’s bizarre ascription of “black” exceptionalism and essentialism to Fanon then leads him to suppose that “Fanon always envisaged liberation as being essentially a release from the phantoms which haunt the psyche of the individual” (p. 83).

21. This is Abiola Irele’s description of a central impulse in Césaire’s *Notebook*, in his introduction to a forthcoming edition of the poem. I must here suspend judgment as to whether Césaire’s version of Negritude is vulnerable to the strictures Fanon levels against the movement and its metaphysics as a whole.
22. McCulloch’s verdict (*Black Soul, White Artifact*, p. 182). As recently as 1991, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese would offer this caricature of Fanon: “In the end he [Fanon] came close to arguing that colonized people must, if necessary, destroy the elevators, the machines, and all the products of Western technology.” See Fox-Genovese, *Feminism without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 185. On the other hand, Ashis Nandy notes the irony that “the most violent denunciation of the West produced by Frantz Fanon is written in the elegant style of a Jean-Paul Sartre.” Could it be that Fanon’s critical vision is informed by what Nandy himself calls a “higher-order universalism,” one that, quite apart from the constraints of history, is free from cultural xenophobia? See Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. xii, xv.
23. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Joyful Wisdom*, trans. Thomas Common (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1960), p. 151.
24. Fanon would, to say the least, have been quite ambivalent toward Habermas’ program of holding on to “the *intentions* of the Enlightenment” on the assumption that “the project of modernity has not yet been fulfilled.” See Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity versus Postmodernity,” *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 9, 12. But he would also have distanced himself from the postmodernist stance, which—misreading the part for the whole, the execrable imperialistic version for the common but variegated vision of historical humanity—pronounces an indiscriminate curse upon humanism as ally of the Enlightenment. To be sure, the later Foucault called for an escape from “the historical and moral confusionism that mixes the theme of humanism with the question of the Enlightenment”—but only to encour-

- age a more radical refusal of humanism. See Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 45.
25. This is Ayi Kwei Armah's description of postrevolutionary communicative action in *Two Thousand Seasons* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973), p. 231.
26. I am here giving my reading of Fanon's usage a recognizably Heideggerian resonance. For an account of Heidegger's notion of the "appropriative event," see David Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 157–159.
27. McCulloch, *Black Soul, White Artifact*, p. 152.
28. Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, in *The Collected Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshelman and Annette Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 49. Strictly speaking, we might say that the goal of a context-specific, ethico-political critique of scientific and technological practices such as Fanon's and Césaire's is not to "depoliticize" them; still less is it a repudiation of technique, science, and instrumental reason. Rather, the goal is to set them to work on behalf of different, more liberating ethico-political ends.
29. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 57–58. See also Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1969), pp. 485–487; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 174–179; also idem, "On the Phenomenology of Language," in Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1960), pp. 84–97.
30. Abiola Irele, "Narrative, History, and the African Imagination," *Narrative* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 164.
31. See, in particular, Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Appendix, pp. 301–317; idem, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" in Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), pp. 1–68; idem, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); idem, "An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative versus Subject-Centred Reason," in Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), pp. 294–326; and idem, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Sherry Weber Nicholson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).
32. On the distinction between the cognitive and interactive uses of language, see Habermas, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" pp. 55–59.

33. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 314.
34. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" and Other Essays, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).
35. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 134.
36. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Departure and Return," in Sartre, *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Collier, 1962), pp. 173–174, where Sartre writes that "the great problems of language may turn out to be only a regional specification of the great ontological problem of the existence of the Other."
37. This sentence, a political pun on Sartre's categories of *being* and *nothingness*, is left out of Haakon Chevalier's translation of Fanon's French text.
38. Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* (St. Louis, Mo.: Telos Press, 1975), p. 145.
39. Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 227.
40. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 314.
41. Fanon might thus have approved of the kind of contextualist challenge to Habermas' communicative ethics presented, for example, by Alessandro Ferrara, "Universalism: Procedural, Contextualist and Prudential," in David Rasmussen, ed., *Universalism vs. Communitarianism: Contemporary Debates in Ethics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 11–37. But Fanon is unlikely to have found common cause with radical antifoundationalist critics of Habermas, such as Richard Rorty. See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 61–68, 82–84.
42. For a different look at the problem of cultural relativism in Fanon's texts, see Patrick Taylor, *The Narrative of Liberation: Perspectives on Afro-Caribbean Literature, Popular Culture and Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 33–37.
43. The passage in which Fanon speaks of "un circuit de complicité," and says that "les deux ordres de réalités s'objectivent par le truchement d'un unique système linguistique," is omitted from Haakon Chevalier's translation.
44. Abiola Irele's characterization of the function of the griot. Following Sembène Ousmane, Irele—in a reading of Ahmadou Kourouma's *Monè, outrages et défis*—suggests an "identity between the function of the griot in tradition and the writer in the modern context." See Irele, "Narrative, History, and the African Imagination," p. 165. My reading of Fanon's vision of the radical intellectual as a modern griot appropriates Irele's Ousmanean view of continuity between "the griot in tradition and the writer in the modern context"—with two significant revisions. First, I extend the mandates of the modern griot to include a range of instrumental, cognitive, and communicative competencies and practices beyond the strictly literary or narrativist

functions of the traditional griot and the writer. Second, I give Fanon's vision a Gramscian twist by accentuating his emphasis on the transformative and radical democratic commitments of the modern griot, as opposed to the commemorative and conservative function of the traditional griot.

45. Irele, "Narrative, History, and the African Imagination," p. 160.
46. Christopher L. Miller, *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 49.
47. *Sociologie d'une révolution* is the title of the 1968 Maspero edition of Fanon's text, a revision of the original 1959 title, *L'an V de la Révolution algérienne*.
48. Aimé Césaire, *The Tragedy of King Christophe*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Grove Press, 1969). Césaire's play, originally published in 1963—that is, at the prime time of the decade of independence—is an arresting allegory of repressive postcolonial developmentalism, one prompted by a tragic if neurotic vision of racial history and destiny.
49. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 74.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 82–84.
51. The phrase is that of Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 156.
52. Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Prière aux masques," in Senghor, *Poèmes* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964), p. 23.
53. Arun P. Mukherjee, "The Exclusions of Postcolonial Theory and Mulk Raj Anand's 'Untouchable': A Case Study," *ARIEL* 22, no. 3 (July 1991), p. 45.
54. I am alluding here to Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (Fall 1986): 65–88.
55. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood* (London: Heinemann, 1977), p. 124.
56. Plato, *Gorgias*, 513d; *idem*, *Theaetetus*, 152a.
57. I borrow this phrase describing a central principle of social relations and jurisprudence in the United States (and in South Africa) from Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (June 1993): 1707–1791.
58. For a different account of gender in *Black Skin, White Masks*, see Gwen Bergner, "Who Is That Masked Woman? Or, The Role of Gender in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*," *PMLA* 110, no. 1 (January 1995): 75–88.
59. The dual obligation to honor "love of the good" and "love of one's own" was central to the political philosophy of George Grant. See Grant, *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969), p. 73.
60. Myrna Kostash, "Domination and Exclusion: Notes of a Resident Alien," in Ian H. Angus, ed., *Ethnicity in a Technological Age* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1988), p. 88.

61. This passage, and indeed the entire text, amply demonstrate that Fanon was anything but naive regarding the relationship between nationalism and the revolutionary feminist project. Fanon is painfully cognizant and critical of the factual reality: masculinist nationalism's constitutive and repressive ignorance of "women's story." Precisely because of that critical knowledge, his account of the transformation of gender relations is not a slavishly empirical report but an invocation of revolutionary possibilities. For empiricist critiques of Fanon's account as being contrary to the facts, steeped in illusions, and insufficiently attentive (in the words of Winifred Woodbull) to "tensions between nationalism and feminism," see Juliette Minces, "Women in Algeria," in Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, eds., *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 159–171; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, "Illusions of Liberation: The Psychology of Colonialism and Revolution in the Work of Octave Mannoni and Frantz Fanon," in Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff, eds., *Rethinking Marxism: Struggles in Marxist Theory: Essays for Harry Magdoff and Paul Sweezy* (New York: Autonomedia, 1985), pp. 127–150; and Winifred Woodbull, *Transfigurations of the Magreb: Feminism, Decolonization, and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 20–24.
62. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1977), p. 280.
63. A version of contemporary feminist discourse—so-called social feminism—proposes "chastening" the coarse structures of the public realm with the alleged private virtues of the family, in particular with the moral practices that accompany "maternal thinking." An eloquent representative of this outlook is Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); see also idem, "Antigone's Daughters," *democracy* 2, no. 2 (April 1982): 46–59. For a critical look at Elshtain's thesis—one that Fanon might have found persuasive—see Mary G. Dietz, "Citizenship with a Feminist Face: The Problem with Maternal Thinking," *Political Theory* 13, no. 1 (February 1985): 19–37. See also Carol C. Gould's insistence that the formation of the democratic character must begin at home, in Gould, "Private Rights and Public Virtues: Women, the Family, and Democracy," in Carol C. Gould, ed., *Beyond Domination: New Perspectives on Women and Philosophy* (Totowa, N.J.: Roman and Allanheld, 1984), pp. 3–18.
64. The paragraph in which this phrase occurs is completely omitted from Haakon Chevalier's translation. The reader of English is thus left unaware that Fanon's text contains perhaps the earliest statement of the "colonial analogy" in the critical description of the subjugation of women. For an explicit invocation of the "colonial analogy" in recent feminist theory, see Robin Morgan, *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* (New

York: Vintage, 1978); and her subsequent reassessment of the analogy in idem, *The Work of A Woman: Feminist Dispatches, 1868–1992* (New York: Norton, 1992), p. 74. I am indebted to Rhonda Hammer of the Sociology Department of York University in Ontario for bringing Morgan's work to my attention.

65. I am here echoing Alasdair MacIntyre's description of changes in the vocabulary of moral judgment characteristic of modernity: see MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 59–60.

EPILOGUE

1. Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, in Césaire, *The Collected Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshelman and Annette Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 67.
2. See Ayi Kwei Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973), prologue.
3. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), pp. 1463–1464.

INDEX

- Abibiman, 41-42
 Absolute knowledge, 17, 29
 Absolute reciprocity, 58
 Absolutes/absolutism, 16-17, 20, 33, 35-36, 107
 Achebe, Chinua, 23-24
 Activism, 39-40, 42
 Adam, Hussein M., 4
 Adorno, Theodor W., 19
 Africa, 3, 39, 71, 181, 236; contemporary history, 2, 11-14, 32, 118, 183, 210, 238, 240; diaspora, 3, 11, 205; authoritarian regimes, 12, 14, 32, 40-41; being-in-the-world, 17, 95; global aspects of its experience, 18; nationalism, 24, 37-38, 102, 151-152, 154, 195; colonial history, 100, 161; ideology, 112; social classes, 133, 136, 157, 161. *See also entries for specific countries*
 African Cultural Society, 181
 Africanization, 102, 151, 209
 African National Congress of South Africa, 12
 Afrocentricism, 195, 210, 249n
 Akan, 41, 214
 Algeria, 185, 189-206, 217-230, 249n
 Alienation: coercive, 73, 125, 191; Marxist view of, 73-76, 209; as prohibition of action, 87; colonial history as, 119, 191; as racial dispossession, 210; and disalienation, 216-217
 Althusser, Louis, 126, 149
 Amin, Idi, 14
 Anaximander, 76
 Anticolonialism, 50, 68, 70, 102, 113, 152, 175, 229
 Antidialectic, 25, 69; history as, 47-55; as space, 72-87
 Antifoundationalism, 36, 111
 Antirationalism, 36
 Apartheid, 2, 12-14, 20, 24-25, 38, 85, 93-94, 133
 Appropriation, 184-211
 Arabic, 200
 Arabs, 219, 221, 252n
 Arendt, Hannah, 3, 28, 87, 164, 238; *The Human Condition*, 254n; *On Violence*, 254n
 Aristotle, 40, 56, 68, 85-86, 90, 158-159, 238, 254n; *Categories*, 55, 72; *Politics*, 211
 Armah, Ayi Kwei, 10-12, 171, 238
 Asante, 39
 Asante, Molefe Kete, 248n
 Authoritarianism: in contemporary Africa, 12, 14, 32, 40-41; capitalist, 20-21; under colonialism, 102, 194; postcolonial, 117; and underdevelopment, 145-146; and modernization, 147; and despotic leaders, 148-149; and enlightenment nationalism, 167; of colonial discourse, 179; and rationalism, 208

- Barber, Benjamin, 265n
 Bar On, Bat-Ami, 250n, 261n
 Baudrillard, Jean, 97, 194
 Bénot, Yves, 4
 Bentham, Jeremy, 23
 Bergner, Gwen, 265n
 Bernstein, Richard J., 265n
 Best, Lloyd, 260n
 Bhabha, Homi K., 2, 8, 10-11, 45-46, 83, 110
 Black culture, 182
 Black radical tradition, 16
 Black soul, 29, 111
 Black truth, 182
 Bloch, Ernst: *Subjekt-Objekt*, 157
 Body, 32, 34, 82-83, 224-226
 Bokassa, Jean-Bédél, 14
 Bolivia, 177
 Bonapartism, 148
 Bourgeoisie: and race, 13, 102, colonial, 26, 130; Marxist view of, 68, 97, 133, 137-138, 155; national, 94, 96, 102, 104, 106, 122-156, 158, 161-162, 172-176, 184
 Brandes, Georg, 55
 Britain, 41
 Brown, Norman O., 15
 Bulhan, Hussein Abdilahi: *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*, 1-4, 6
 Buthelezi, Mangosuthu, 14, 118, 169

 Cabral, Amílcar, 166-167, 174, 177, 246n
 Camus, Albert, 110
 Capécia, Mayotte, 91-92, 215-216
 Capitalism: and race, 13; transnational, 21, 127, 133; Marxist view of, 73-75; and apartheid, 133; and class, 134, 150; and bourgeoisie, 138, 143; Leninist view of, 142; political power in, 146, 150; colonial, 178
 Caribbean, 2-3, 7, 90
 Castillo, Otto René, 258n
 Césaire, Aimé, 15, 21, 31, 156, 177, 190, 211, 238; *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, 12, 80-81, 262n, 263n;
The Tragedy of King Christophe, 12, 209, 265n
 Class, 35, 94, 96, 258n; struggles, 19-20, 110-111; and nationalism, 37; Marxist view of, 68, 137-138, 142-143, 154; politics of, 107, 135, 237; ascendancy, 124; dramaturgy of, 128; consciousness, 129; genealogy of relations, 130-134; hegemonic, 153, 158; language of, 159-160; and national self-renewal, 172-173. *See also* Bourgeoisie; Lumpenproletariat; Peasantry; Proletariat
 Class reductionism, 104, 110, 125
 Coercion, 12, 77-79, 82-84, 96, 120, 125, 133, 153, 191
 Colletti, Lucio, 252n
 Colonial discourse theory, 179
 Colonialism, 12, 68, 175, 189, 193; ontological approach to, 19, 76; and human essences, 22; and truth, 35; separatist/regionalist nature of, 42; as absurd drama, 50; Marxist view of, 69-70; dying, 101; peasant attitude toward, 113; political economy of, 136, 141, 158, 165; and patriarchy, 229. *See also* Anti-colonialism; Decolonization
 Colonizer-colonized relationship, 24-26, 37, 52-56, 61, 68-69, 71-72, 77, 83, 88-98, 102, 109-110, 158, 186, 193-195, 237, 249n
 Color line, 99
 Communicative action, 179, 185, 192, 195, 197, 205, 225-226
 Communism, 14-15, 164, 209
 Consciousness, 26-29, 57-58, 62, 64, 66-67, 71, 79-80, 117-118, 123, 128, 137, 139-140, 154-155, 170
 Coser, Lewis A., 260n, 261n
 Cultural relativism, 198, 218
 Cunningham, Frank, 260n

 Damas, Léon-Gontran: *Pigments*, 72
 Decolonization, 35, 42, 50, 53, 61, 102-112, 152, 171, 194, 205, 224-225, 227, 231, 240
 De Gaulle, Charles, 226

- Democracy, 20; refashioning authoritarian regimes into, 12, 14-15; international, 15; nativist, 21; fight for, 139; postcolonial, 181, 237; Marxist view of, 202; radical, 204-205, 209; and humanism, 213, 238; and women, 218; ethical aspects of, 233-234
- Dernersesian, Angie Chabram, 259n
- Derrida, Jacques, 255n
- Dialectic, 4-5, 22-23, 56-58; narrative as, 24-31; as politics, 31-46
- Diaspora, African, 3, 11, 205
- Dietz, Mary G., 266n
- Disalienation, 216-217
- Distribution, 117, 121-122, 135-137, 143-144, 166
- Distributive justice/injustice, 117, 145, 162
- Divided line, 99-100
- Dividing line, 86-100, 115, 206, 212, 214
- Douga, 41-42
- Dramatic narrative, 4-5, 7-8, 17, 34-36
- Du Bois, W. E. B., 15-16, 99-100
- Durkheim, Emile, 257n
- Elshtain, Jean Bethke, 266n
- Emancipation, 59-61, 117, 122, 138, 202, 221, 230, 259n
- Emerson, Rupert, 264n
- Engels, Friedrich, 47, 69, 103, 138; *Communist Manifesto* (with Marx), 99, 123, 154, 164; *The German Ideology* (with Marx), 20, 48-49, 121, 142
- Enlightenment, 26-27, 29, 43-44, 111, 115-117, 159, 167, 179, 187-188, 221, 237, 239, 262n
- Essence, 22, 38, 45, 52, 127, 239
- Essentialism, 89, 126-127
- Ethical issues, 33, 42, 44, 67, 124, 233-234
- Ethnicity, 33, 37-39, 42, 44, 118, 121, 169, 171, 262n
- Ethnocentrism, 17
- Europe, 21, 84, 151, 160, 171, 181-183, 186, 190, 195, 226. *See also entries for specific countries*
- Exclusion, 157-171
- Existentialism, 18, 45, 67, 70-73, 79-82, 95, 127-129
- Experience, 4-5, 16-20, 27-28, 30-31, 34, 36-38, 44, 54, 66, 104, 237
- Family, 217-218, 231-232
- Fanon, Frantz: "The Algerian Family," 227-229; "Algeria Unveiled," 218, 222; "The Black Person and Language," 192; *Black Skin, White Masks*, 3, 6-7, 11, 17, 19, 21-22, 30, 47-51, 53-56, 58, 60-62, 66-68, 71-72, 76-77, 81-94, 96-103, 105, 107, 116, 122, 149-150, 157-159, 166, 171, 180, 182, 191, 193-194, 206-207, 210, 212, 214-215, 217, 225, 228-229; *A Dying Colonialism*, 40, 185, 211, 214, 217-218; "Medicine and Colonialism," 185; "Misadventures of National Consciousness," 140, 143-145, 149-151, 155; "The Negro and Hegel," 25, 56, 62; "Racism and Culture," 87, 89, 92; "This Is the Voice of Algeria," 185, 191, 195; *The Wretched of the Earth*, 2-3, 21-22, 24, 33-34, 40, 46-47, 54, 60, 69, 81, 97, 99, 101-102, 104, 111, 122-123, 182, 210, 225, 238-239
- Fanon, Josie, 252n
- Farrington, Constance, 35-36, 140, 148, 211, 257n
- Federalism, 169
- Feminism, 20, 220, 266n
- Feminist epistemology, 52
- Feuerbach, Ludwig, 98, 115, 119
- Fodéba, Kéita, 40-41; *Poèmes africains*, 42
- Foster-Carter, Aidan, 258n
- Foucault, Michel, 15-17, 29-30, 34, 38, 49, 73, 77, 85, 221, 227, 239, 262n
- Foundationalism, 34, 45, 111, 171, 192, 202, 239
- Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth, 262n; with Eugene D. Genovese, 266n
- France, 41, 193, 195-196, 199-201, 204, 219, 221, 226, 249n

- French language, 9, 90, 200–201
 Freud, Sigmund, 6, 19, 49, 95, 245n
 Fyfe, Christopher, 100
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 256n
 Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., 11
 Gender, 15, 37–38, 91, 96, 213–234, 266n
 Gendzier, Irene: *Frantz Fanon*, 1, 60
 Genealogy, 30, 102, 104, 130–134
 Germany, 41
 Gilroy, Paul, 3
 Gobineau, Joseph-Arthur de, 19
 Gottlieb, Roger S., 244n
 Gould, Carol C., 248n, 252n, 266n
 Gramsci, Antonio, 29, 85–86, 118–119, 124–125, 129–130, 134–135, 139, 145, 148–150, 180, 204; *Letters from Prison*, 31; *Prison Notebooks*, 118
 Grant, George, 265n
 Griots, 204, 207, 265n
 Guevara, Che, 177
 Guinea, 32, 40
 Guinea-Bissau, 177
- Habermas, Jürgen, 192–194, 196–197
 Hansen, Emmanuel: *Frantz Fanon*, 1, 4
 Harding, Sandra, 250n
 Harris, Cheryl L., 265n
 Hartsock, Nancy, 250n
 Hegel, G. W. F., 17, 19, 28–31, 34, 36, 42, 58–64, 68, 73, 105, 115–116, 121–122, 167, 170–171; *Logic*, 55; *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 15, 24–27, 47, 53, 55–57, 61, 72, 111
 Hegemony, 85–86, 127–128, 145, 149, 153, 158, 180
 Heidegger, Martin, 62, 73, 79, 192–193, 208; *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, 27–28, 101
 Henry, Michel, 259n
 Hermeneutics, postindependence, 10–24, 180
 Historical materialism, 23, 49, 77, 108, 123–125, 146, 154–155, 165
 Historicism, 22, 49, 69, 123, 154–155
 History: lived, 18; colonial versus human, 20, 69, 108; abuses of, 22; and universals, 25, 31, 112; lessons of, 42; as anti-dialectic, 47–55, 158; end of, 98; as process, 103–105; appeal to, 110; judgment of, 155; and national culture, 181
 Hobbes, Thomas, 56, 63, 65, 67, 70, 79–80, 148
 Hountondji, Paulin, 52, 107, 261n
 Huizinga, Johann, 95
 Human essence, 22, 45, 239
 Humanism, 45–46, 195; radical, 3, 31, 209, 238; new, 21, 118, 153, 181, 184, 190, 213; ontological aspects of, 75; and common sense, 124; developmentalist, 182
 Human rights, 20, 218
- Idealism, 79, 130, 172
 Immediacy, 25, 34, 47, 51–52, 54, 102, 105, 107, 109, 117, 121, 159
 Immediate knowledge, 26, 35, 47, 53–55, 100, 102, 104, 119
 Intelligentsia, 180, 184, 194, 196, 207
 Interpreters, 194
 Irele, Abiola, 262n, 264n
 Israel, 252n
 Italy, 118–119, 124–125
- Jacobinism, 118, 124
 Jaggar, Alison, 52
 James, C. L. R., 16, 243n
 Jameson, Fredric, 244n, 256n
 Jeanson, Francis, 48, 103
 Jeyifo, Biodun, 256n
 Jinadu, L. Adele: *Fanon*, 1, 247n
- Kant, Immanuel, 64, 157, 171
 Kennedy, Paul, 258n
 Kenya, 144, 258n
 Kierkegaard, Søren, 59
 Kitching, Gavin, 258n
 Knowledge: universalizing, 16; absolute, 17, 29; rational, 25, 111–123, 179; immediate, 26, 35, 47, 53–55, 100, 102, 104, 109; transcendental, 36; theoretical, 44; and class, 142
 Kojève, Alexandre, 32, 73
 Kolb, David, 247n

- Kostash, Myrna, 265n
Kourouma, Ahmadou, 264n
- Labor, 23, 60-61, 74-75, 98, 164-165, 209
Lacan, Jacques, 7-8
Laclau, Ernesto, 110, 125, 252n
Language, 177, 183; political, 5, 192; psychoanalytic, 8; textual aspects of, 36; and rhetoric, 48, 50, 73, 77, 134, 160, 209; of colonizer, 90-92, 158-159, 192-195; national, 122; of outrage, 155; and communicative action, 179, 185, 192, 195, 197, 205, 225-226; alienation of use, 191; and interpreters, 194; official, 195; as symbol of modernity, 200
Leiss, William, 261n
Lenin, V. I., 85, 142
Leys, Colin, 258n
Liberating narrative, 2, 32
Libya, 219
Liquidation, 42-44
Lorde, Audre: *Sister Outsider*, 185
Love, 56, 67-68, 91-92, 215
Lukács, Georg, 52, 78, 137
Lumpenproletariat, 26, 109, 120, 125, 158-159, 162-163, 165-167
Lyotard, Jean-François, 254n
- Machiavelli, Niccolò, 118, 145
MacIntyre, Alasdair, 267n
Maghrebe, 219-220
Malagasy, 6
Mande, 41-42
Mandela, Nelson, 2, 12
Manicheism, 22, 35, 37, 50, 52, 65, 68-69, 85, 107, 114-115, 159, 215
Mannoni, Octave, 6
Maquisards, 176-177
Marabout, 42
Maran, René: *Un homme pareil aux autres*, 216
Marcuse, Herbert, 75, 156, 221, 259n
Marx, Karl, 14, 29, 47, 55, 61, 68, 90, 97, 123, 137-138, 143-144, 155, 160, 174, 202, 209-210, 225, 230, 245n, 259n; *Capital*, 23, 87; *Communist Manifesto* (with Engels), 19, 123, 154, 164; *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, 164; *Critique of the Gotha Program*, 117; *The German Ideology* (with Engels), 20, 48-49, 121, 142; *Grundrisse*, 73-76; *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 49, 53-54
Marxism, 14-16, 18, 32, 44, 51, 53-55, 60, 68-70, 72-73, 75, 77, 85, 87, 99, 103, 107, 109-111, 119-120, 122, 130-131, 133, 137-138, 155, 161, 164
Master-slave relationship, 25, 56-61, 63, 68
McBride, William Leon, 62
McCulloch, Jock, 110, 184; *Black Soul*, *White Artifact*, 1, 4, 7, 44, 46, 261n
Mediation, 55-56, 149, 203-204
Medicine, 186-190
Megill, Kenneth A., 245n
Memmi, Albert: *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 68-69
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 79, 82-83, 254n
Mészáros, István, 258n
Miller, Christopher L.: *Theories of Africans*, 32-35, 38-44, 46
Minces, Juliette, 266n
Minkowski, Eugène: *Lived Time*, 78-79
Mobutu Sese Seko, 14
Modernity, 147, 157, 162, 169, 181-187, 190, 199-200, 206, 217, 221, 233
Morera, Esteve, 253n
Morgan, Robin, 228
Morocco, 219
Morrison, Toni: *Playing in the Dark*, 1
Mostern, Kenneth, 3
Mouffe, Chantal, 110, 125
Mukherjee, Arun P., 265n
Myths, 2, 120, 190-191, 219
- Nandy, Ashis, 3, 244n, 262n
Narrative: liberating versus mythical, 2; dramatic, 4-5, 7-8, 17, 34-36; different genres, 18-19; action of, 22, 35; as dialectic, 24-31; discourse, 32, 34; institutions, 38, 40; figural modes, 158-159

- Nation/nationhood, 33, 37-38, 43, 48, 139, 167, 169-171, 218
- National bourgeoisie, 94, 96, 102, 104, 106, 122-156, 158, 161-162, 172-176, 184
- National consciousness, 123, 139-140, 154-155, 170
- National culture, 40, 96, 120, 122, 181
- Nationalism, 147, 170, 219, 266n; of dominant elites, 20; cultural, 22, 181, 220; in contemporary Africa, 24, 37-38, 102, 151-152, 154, 195; and truth, 35; racialized, 36, 102, 107, 237; and class, 37, 134; role of political parties, 43, 172; anticolonial, 50, 152, 175, 229; revolutionary aspects of, 105; politics of, 109, 195; myth of unanimity, 120; contradictory aspects of, 150-154, 210, 212; authoritarian, 167; bourgeois, 175-177; and alienation, 209; and women, 225, 229
- Nationalization, 151
- National Liberation Front, 196
- Nativism, 21, 131, 133-135, 187, 191
- Negritude, 7, 16-17, 30, 44, 181, 262n
- Negrophobia, 7
- Neocolonialism, 24, 150, 158, 181
- New humanism, 21, 118, 153, 181, 184, 190, 213
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o: *A Grain of Wheat*, 112; *Petals of Blood*, 213
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 55, 60, 123, 183, 233; *Twilight of the Idols*, 101
- Nkrumah, Kwame, 14
- Nurse-Bray, Paul, 246n
- Oedipus complex, 7
- Ogun, 41
- Ontology, 19, 62, 64-65, 67, 69-70, 73-76, 79, 127, 193-194, 202, 239
- Organic: Gramsci's view of the, 148-149
- Orientalism, 221-222, 225
- Oulguem, Yambo, 39
- Ousmane, Sembène, 264n
- Paci, Enzo, 257n
- Pan-Africanism, 2, 40-41
- Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa, 47, 115
- Parkin, Frank, 260n
- Parry, Benita, 248n
- Particulars/particularism, 18, 20-22, 35-36, 52, 54, 104, 137, 161, 169-170
- Patriarchy, 229-232, 234
- Peasantry, 26, 44, 109, 113-114, 120, 125, 135, 157-163, 165-167, 169, 176-178
- Perinbam, B. Marie, 260n
- Perspectivism, 51-52
- Plato, 210, 213; *Republic*, 99
- Political parties, 43, 148-149, 172
- Political pragmatics, 196-198, 202
- Politicism, 29, 31, 87
- Politics: of race, 13-14; dialectic as, 31-46; and violence, 87; of class, 107, 135, 237; of nationalism, 109, 195; of colonialism, 136, 141, 158, 165; and capitalism, 146, 150
- Possession rituals, 94-95
- Postmodernism, 2-3, 21, 45-46, 68, 186, 239, 248n
- Postnationalism, 209-210
- Poststructuralism, 20, 110, 126
- Proletariat, 26, 67-68, 93, 97, 120, 128-133, 135, 137-138, 158, 164
- Protagoras, 213
- Psychiatry, 2, 262n
- Psychoanalysis, 5-8, 18-19
- Race, 54; and psychoanalysis, 7-8; politics of, 13-14; colonial aspects of, 15, 89; struggles, 19, 110; and human essences, 22; and love/desire, 67, 91-92; nationalist aspects of, 237
- Race reductionism, 19, 23, 30, 44, 107, 109, 171
- Racism, 11, 18, 43, 90, 92-93, 102, 107, 111, 154, 181
- Radio, 196-200, 204-205, 217
- Rationalism, 17, 32, 34, 36, 116-117, 187, 208
- Rational knowledge, 25, 111-123, 179
- Reciprocity, 56-58, 63-66, 68-69, 71-72
- Recognition, 4, 56-58, 63, 72, 112

- Reforms/reformism, 137, 172, 175
- Relativism, 20, 33-34, 107, 147, 197-198, 218
- Representation, 5, 34, 38, 53, 143
- Résistance Algérienne*, 222
- Revolution, 98, 110, 195, 259n; anticolonial, 47-48, 70; radical, 97, 109; Marxist view of, 103, 109; nationalist, 105, 118, 138; strategies/action, 108, 224-225; acephalous, 122; and consciousness, 137; bourgeois, 138; peasant, 161-168, 176-178; proletarian, 162-167, 177; permanent, 201; and women, 225, 227
- Rhetoric, 48, 50, 73, 77, 134, 160, 209
- Rich, Adrienne, 24
- Ricoeur, Paul, 36, 67, 79, 113, 230-231
- Robinson, Cedric, 16, 245n
- Rorty, Richard, 110-111, 248n, 264n
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 113, 135
- Rwanda, 118
- Said, Edward: *Culture and Imperialism*, 2
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, 19, 53, 55, 68, 79-80, 82, 90, 103, 174, 192-193, 214, 216, 249n, 252n; *Being and Nothingness*, 61-65, 70-71; *Black Orpheus*, 16-17, 30, 70-71; *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 61, 64-67, 69-70, 87; *No Exit*, 97; *Search for a Method*, 67
- Scarcity, 65
- Schatz, Sayre P., 258n
- Schroyer, Trent, 60
- Senegal, 6, 41
- Senghor, Léopold Sédar, 7, 95, 201, 212
- Serequeberhan, Tsenay, 243n
- Sexism, 111, 214
- Sherover, Erica, 261n
- Socialism, 14; scientific, 164-165
- Socrates, 197
- Somalia, 42, 118
- Sophocles, 23
- Sorel, Georges, 69
- South Africa, 2, 12-14, 47, 84, 115, 118, 133
- Soviet Union, 14-15
- Soyinka, Wole, 16, 41, 193, 236, 239
- Space/spatiality, 71-87, 159, 252n
- Spinoza, Baruch, 42
- Strauss, Leo, 32, 36-37
- Substitution, 96-97
- Swahili, 195
- Swainson, Nicola, 258n
- Taylor, Charles, 243n
- Taylor, Patrick: *The Narrative of Liberation*, 2, 4, 32, 34, 246n
- Technology, 157, 186, 190, 200, 207-209
- Theoretical knowledge, 44
- Third World, 126, 135, 245n
- Time/temporality, 73-79, 87, 101
- Totalitarianism, 44, 158, 167, 254n
- Touré, Sékou, 32-33, 40-41
- Trade unions, 161
- Tribalism, 38, 42-43, 151, 169-170
- Trotsky, Leon, 145, 199
- Truth, 5, 25, 28, 32-35, 37, 57-58, 100, 104, 107, 159, 182, 187, 195
- Tunisia, 219
- Unanimism, 52, 107, 117, 120, 127, 237
- Underdevelopment, 132-135, 145-146, 173, 181, 186, 190, 197
- United Nations Conference on Human Rights, 218
- Universals/universalism, 16-22, 25, 30, 33-36, 39, 42, 70, 104, 107, 140, 169-170, 175, 187, 198, 239
- Valéry, Paul, 90-91, 192
- Veil, 99, 213, 218-228
- Vencuse, Jean, 92, 216
- Violence, 11, 94, 185, 254n; discourse of, 3-4, 57, 98, 160; of colonial domination, 17, 61-62, 91, 105, 158; pure, 25, 86, 149; totalizing, 38-39, 42, 44; reciprocal, 65, 69; Marxist view of, 68-70, 103; and politics, 87; enlightening aspect of, 98; as absence of mediation, 149; and the postcolonial state, 150; and race, 158
- Voice of Algeria*, 196, 200-204, 217
- Voluntarism, 171, 176

- Wallerstein, Immanuel, 126
Weber, Max, 147
Weinstein, Michael A., 77-78, 82, 85
Welch, Sharon, 21, 246n
West, Cornel, 247n
White, Hayden, 51, 102, 158
Woddis, Jack, 110, 129, 169; *New Theories of Revolution*, 44
Women, 213-234, 266n
Wood, Ellen Meiksins, 258n
Woodbull, Winifred, 266n
World War II, 41
Wright, Richard, 16
Wright, Roland: *Stolen Continents*, 185
Young, Robert, 248n
Yoruba, 41
Zahar, Renate, 60