

False Presences: Fanon's Reinforcement of the Female Subaltern

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
In  
Foreign Languages and Literatures

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May 6, 2014  
Blacksburg, VA

Keywords: Fanon, subaltern, false presence, silencing, effacement, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*, *Les damnés de la terre*

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### ABSTRACT

A false presence of the colonized female arises within Frantz Fanon's books *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*, and *Les damnés de la terre*. Through a close reading of these texts, this thesis aims to locate where these blind spots exist and how they are facilitated by Fanon, while also acknowledging the potential for these exclusions to be accidental. The introduction provides a brief synopsis of Fanon's life and the colonial relations of his time, namely the Algerian revolution. The first chapter deals with how Fanon's language reinforces the female subaltern through silencing, effacement, and stereotypical language. The second chapter concerns the similarities between racial and gendered power relations within his books. In the third chapter, I discuss hierarchies of power and their establishment through gendered binaries. Finally, my concluding chapter posits how addressing these false presences can lead to deeper understanding and interaction with the female subaltern in Fanon's books.

### **Acknowledgements**

First, I would like to thank my committee members for all their support in providing constant feedback throughout this process. This undertaking would have been significantly more daunting without the combined help from all of you.

I will secondly thank my family for their love and support throughout my entire life, including my academic career, and for forgiving my sporadic communication in the last stretch.

Third, my university and especially the staff and faculty of my department deserve recognition for their tireless efforts in creating a creative atmosphere that facilitated this analysis.

Thank you all.

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## Introduction

### **The Fanon legacy**

The majority of gender analyses of Fanon's works focus primarily on his first book, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (*Black skin, white masks*), because it contains the most overt discussion of women. Between the three books *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* (*Sociology of a revolution*), and *Les damnés de la terre* (*The wretched of the earth*), there are only three chapters that indicate gender in their titles. "La femme de couleur et le Blanc" (The woman of color and the White man) and "L'homme de couleur et la Blanche" (The man of color and the White woman) of *Peau noire, masques blancs* are easily juxtaposed in terms of Fanon's amount of sympathy for those involved and is the crux of most analyses. Just as "L'homme de couleur et la Blanche" contains an analysis of literature as representative of interracial relationships between men of color and white women, "La femme de couleur et le Blanc" critiques Mayotte Capécia's *Je suis martiniquaise* (*I am a Martinican woman*) as representative of interracial relationships between women of color and white men. To a lesser extent do critics discuss "L'Algérie se dévoile" (Algeria unveils) of *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*, in which colonized women and the veil often connected to her become metaphors for Algeria, and in which colonized women are replaced not only in the title of the chapter by Algeria but in the focus of it by the veil. The rest of the chapters of Fanon's books have gender-neutral titles that may include women, such as "La famille algérienne" (The Algerian Family) of *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*, but colonized women are rarely a subset of the argument if they are included at all. Both in Fanon's texts and the writing about him, the disproportionate amount of writing focusing on the colonized man far overshadows that on the colonized woman, and as such limits what

critics have thus far prioritized in their analyses. While I will discuss these three chapters in my analysis, there are many other areas that are indicative of Fanon's perspectives a propos the colonized female, her worth, and her lot. I apply Fanon's racial colonial discourse to those of the colonized woman to remove the silencing of her voice from the call for equality and the doubling of oppression against her. The colonized male is the focus and norm for Fanon: it is his actions and wishes that dominate Fanon's books and it is his liberation that Fanon seeks.

Fanon pioneered postcolonial writing at a time when decolonization had not occurred in Algeria, the main colony of his later writings, for Fanon wrote *L'an V de la révolution* about Algeria and *Les damnés de la terre* to and for "his Algerian and African comrades" (Cherki 170). He published his works during the heart of the Algerian revolution and readers can only assume the impact that the revolution had on his writings, as they became progressively more extreme as the war continued. His invaluable contributions to the identification and deconstruction of colonial power relations remain relevant decades later, yet his treatment of women is a polemic topic. His writing is patriarchal, yet he published decades before the feminist movements of many countries (Western ones included) took mainstream form. While readers cannot condemn him for his lack of acknowledgement of gender power relations, one may wonder why and how he did not perceive these issues as efficiently as he did those of race and class. The purpose of this thesis is not to denounce a man who changed and in many ways is still affecting change in the (post)colonial world, but rather to establish an identification of his blind spots and how they manifest in his works. His silencing and effacement through patriarchal normativity and stereotyping work to create a false presence of the colonized

woman in his works, and his endorsement (intentional or subconscious) of a power binary that mimicked the racial one he deconstructed functioned to deny the colonized woman her political and sexual agency. Fanon was ahead of his time in many ways, and *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*, and *Les damnés de la terre* continue to be an integral contributions to post colonialism, but now the critic must determine where the blind spots fall in his work with regard to gender, and how to address them.

### **Literary Analysis**

Fanon's works reinforce the idea of the colonized woman as subaltern, and Chantal Kalisa focuses on sexual politics and its consequent stereotypes throughout Fanon's works. Through Fanon's portrayal of the colonized woman's assimilative nature both when in France and in the colony, her association with the veil, and as a negative image to the man, Kalisa demonstrates the subaltern's presence-absence in Fanon's narratives. She zeroes in on the irony behind Fanon's claim of a lack of knowledge about the black woman and devoting a chapter to her interracial relationship within *Peau noire, masques blancs*, as well as his ambivalence toward her and how this ambivalence is often marred by his resentment towards her. However, ambivalence in itself involves both sympathetic and unsympathetic feelings towards an object and hence I posit that Fanon's portrayals of the colonized woman are predominantly caustic, and these instances far outweigh any even slightly sympathetic representations, which does not leave room for an even slightly neutral overall feeling. One of the only instances in which Fanon's portrayals could be considered sympathetic towards the woman include when she is involved in the fight for liberation, although she remains an object to be manipulated by

men towards a particular end rather than having an inherent value. In essence, Fanon's patriarchal stances arise from either a subconscious or overt denial of colonized woman's presence, value and agency, none of which is conducive to the occasionally sympathetic portrayals necessary to exhibit a real "ambivalence." Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting takes a different view from most critics by depicting Fanon as a "advocating gender equity and liberation, [and also] representative of a *profeminist* consciousness" (3, original emphasis). However, I posit that Fanon rarely creates an intentional inclusion of women, and that indeed the many stereotypes, silences, and effacement surrounding her work against her inclusion in much of his books. Gwen Bergner's writing on Fanon's "masked woman" inherently focuses on *Peau noire, masques blancs* rather than on all three of his books. However, *Peau noire, masques blancs* is but the origin where I find many of the roles colonized women play throughout Fanon's works, and thus any exclusion of his subsequent publications inherently limits the depth to which readers can witness his silencing and effacement of her. Linda Lane and Hauwa Mahdi create a profound analysis of Fanon's treatment of the colonized woman, especially with regard to the inherent blind spots arising from his prioritizing race above class and gender and how they all intersect. However, they focus mostly on the chapter "La femme de couleur et le Blanc" – despite a few inclusions of its partner chapter "L'homme de couleur et la Blanche" – and the work it is based on (Mayotte Capécia's *Je suis martiniquaise*). Although their direct microcomparison allows for a deep delving into Fanon's deconstruction of racial power relations and the intersections of race, class, and gender that existed under colonialism, it nevertheless does not draw comparisons among Fanon's works to truly reveal how these blind spots are not slight transgressions that can easily be



excused by his environment, but rather gross and possibly intentional errors that create ever more layers of oppression under which the colonized woman exists. The colonized woman is dually subaltern because she is oppressed by the colonized man, who is in turn oppressed by the colonists, creating a multilayered system through which readers attempt to reach her. While, as Spivak mentions, the dually subaltern colonized woman is, indeed, unable to speak to us (26) through the many layers of silencing, effacement, and stereotypes in Fanon's writing, it is through identification of these absences that readers discover where and how to reach her. The idea behind this thesis differs in that the subaltern woman receives the chance to interact with readers once we identify the obstacles between ourselves and the colonized woman. Perhaps she cannot speak to us now, nor will she ever within Fanon's world and writings, but this does not mean that we should stop working towards each other. Fanon deconstructed race by revealing the limit of European racial binaries, but he at the same time leaves holes in his argument by reinforcing power relations based on gender binaries.

Although many critics focus on Fanon's depiction of women in an attempt to elicit a presence of women despite the layers of silencing and effacement, there is another level to consider in order determine whether any action will take place by critics to address such reinforcement of the female's subalternity. Scholarly discourse allows us to see where these silences and effacements occur, and therefore an attempt can be made to understand why this is so. However, it is unsure whether it is simply enough to locate these instances without determining how they can be more closely read to reinterpret the role of the colonized woman in Fanon's books and in his call for decolonization.

The loudest group has been those who have called Fanon a misogynist who purposefully excluded women from his works because he did not want to grant them equality. I differ from these critics in suggesting that Fanon's exclusions may have just as easily arisen from a subconscious subscription to the dominant thinking of his time. A second group ignores Fanon's false inclusion altogether because of this justification. However, I find these just as culpable as the first group and Fanon himself, for they are perpetuating the exclusion of colonized women through a veil of justifications. While his time and contemporaries may save Fanon from such an egregious act of reinforcing the idea of the colonized woman as the subaltern, our modern discussions should focus on seeing where these exclusions arise and how to address them. We cannot change Fanon's words, nor can we change the lot he granted the colonized woman within his books, but we can see how and where these blind spots are facilitated. By identifying these false presences, we can look for patterns of exclusions, and it is through this new way of reading Fanon's books that we can interact with the colonized woman in a different way.

### **Frantz Fanon and the Algerian War of Independence**

Frantz Fanon may have been born and raised in Martinique by a "métisse" (mulatto) woman and black man. Fanon studied psychiatry and medicine in France after leaving his native Martinique, and shortly thereafter practiced psychiatry in Algeria until the beginning of the revolution in 1954. After joining the Front de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Front, or FLN) at the local and then regional level in Algeria (Cherki 84), Fanon was expelled from Algeria in 1957 and he spent his remaining years traveling between France, Tunis and the United States [after he was diagnosed with leukemia].

Upon his death, Fanon left behind a family that included a European wife, indicating he fulfilled the aspiration of the educated colonized man of his works' of deserving a white wife, as described in his third chapter of *Peau noire, masques blancs*. The way in which a man of color could deserve a white wife is through his education and consequent whitening because "le Blanc accepte donc de lui donner sa sœur – mais à une condition: tu n'as rien de commun avec les véritables nègres. Tu n'es pas noir, tu es 'excessivement brun'" (the white man grants his sister to the him – but under one condition: you have nothing in common with real blacks. You are not black, you are "excessively brown") (56). Not only does this education make him acceptable in the mind of the white Europeans because he has transcended his blackness, it also causes an imposed isolation from his home and people. According to his texts, as an educated black man, he remains isolated from his black countrymen from Martinique because he surpasses them. The students of color in France were held separate both in the métropole and the colony according to Fanon's depictions of colonized societies because "On refuse de les considérer comme d'authentiques nègres. Le nègre c'est le sauvage, tandis que l'étudiant est un évolué" (people refuse to consider them true blacks. A black is a savage, just as a student is evolved) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 56). Readers then wonder how Fanon regards the black men he writes to liberate, because he did indeed politically separate himself from the blacks of Martinique when he chose to identify as Algerian rather than Martinican.

In "L'homme de couleur et la Blanche", Fanon analyses the situation of the black man in René Maran's semi-autobiographical (to Fanon) writings – represented by Jean Veneuse – and how he, like all nonwhites educated in France prioritize and can merit the

love of a white women. Veneuse is from The Antilles (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 52) just as Fanon, himself originally was. Veneuse seeks the love of the white woman and justifies this wish by believing that “En m’aimant, elle me prouve que je suis digne d’un amour blanc. On m’aime comme un blanc. Je suis un Blanc” (by loving me, she proves me worthy of a white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 51). The love of a white women is a validation of the whiteness and allows these men to fulfill their dream, as established by the second sentence of this chapter stating “Je ne veux pas être reconnu comme *Noir*, mais comme *Blanc*” (I do not want to be seen as a *Black*, but as a *White*) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 51).

The Algerian War of Independence lasted from 1954-1962 and involved a series of atrocities on both sides. While Fanon wrote throughout the war, his death occurred before its end and just months after the 1961 massacre of Algerians in Paris. His experiences in colonies, the war, and the métropole led to his commitment to equality between the races, and his pioneering work has had significant impact on the field of postcolonial theory. Throughout this thesis, I use the word “métropole” to indicate France and its government during colonialism. Fanon writes of France as exploitative and controlling of its colonies through layers an institutionalized racism that he deconstructs over the course of *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne*, and *Les damnés de la terre*, and as the dominant in in the power relations between itself and the colonies.

Fanon’s numerous moves caused significant exposure of colonialism both by living in colonized areas as well as the métropole behind them, and it was the violence,

exploitation, and oppression that he witnessed between the métropole and its colonies that inspired his writing. *Peau noire, masques blancs* begins to deconstruct the racial institutions of colonialism and how they are internalized by the people of the colonies, especially the men. *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* discusses sociocultural and political issues in a critically deconstructive analysis of colonialism. *Les damnés de la terre* involves a significantly more violent tone and reveal the increase of extremism in Fanon's works as time progressed. *Peau noire, masques blancs* was the first of Fanon's books, published in 1952. *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* followed in 1959, and *Les damnés de la terre* was his last book in 1961, both of which he wrote following his resignation and subsequent expulsion from Algeria in early 1957 (Cherki 90), and the last one published in the year of his death.

At this time, both Algeria and Martinique were still colonies of France and indeed, Martinique remains a department to this day while Algeria gained independence in 1962. Martinique's colonized population differed strongly from that of Algeria because of its historical and geographical identity. The island was not only significantly further from the métropole, but its indigenous inhabitants had been largely exterminated and replaced with slaves brought from Africa, thus instilling a newer history for its people than many other countries. Conversely, Algeria had a much older population who had not been physically, but metaphysically removed through colonialism's alteration of their history as documented in *Les damnés de la terre* (156):

“On sait que la majorité des territoires arabes a été soumise à la domination colonial. Le colonialisme a déployé dans ces régions les mêmes efforts pour ancrer dans l'esprit des

indigènes que leur histoire d'avant la colonisation était une histoire dominée par la barbarie... La passion mise par les auteurs arabes contemporains à rappeler à leur peuple les grandes pages de l'histoire arabe est une réponse aux mensonges de l'occupant.

We know the majority of Arabic countries have undergone colonial domination. Colonialism has used the same efforts in these regions to instill in the minds of the indigenous people that their history before colonialism was one dominated by barbarism... The passion with which contemporary Arabic authors are reminding their people of their grand history is a response to the lies of these occupants.

While both Martinique and Algeria suffered through colonialism, and their history was hidden by a depiction of false barbarism and negative stereotypes that Fanon uncovered in order to call for decolonization, Algeria's station was unique in that it had been "considered French since 1830" but its division into departments "were a pure fiction that never succeeded in masking that this was a colonized territory" (Cherki 38). While he sought the end of colonialism in general, the methods he employed through the books differed depending on the situation of the colonies. In *Peau noire, masques blancs*, which specifically discusses Martinique, Fanon focuses on liberating the men and women of color whereas *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* clearly focused on sociopolitical institutions behind colonialism in Algeria, but extended past calling the

colonized “people of color” to focus on their ethnicity. *Les damnés de la terre* complicates the issue by mentioning the “racialisation de la pensée [car] En Afrique, la littérature colonisée des vingt dernières années n’est pas une littérature nationale mais un littérature de nègres” (racialization of thought [because] In Africa, the colonized literature of the past twenty years is not a national literature, but one of blacks) (155). In this last work, Fanon conflates the race and national interplay of African colonial culture despite the fact that he earlier alluded to the different views colonies had on each other. For example, Fanon recounts the fact that “nous avons connu et nous connaissons encore des Antillais qui se vexent quand on les soupçonne d’être Sénégalais. C’est que l’Antillais est plus ‘évolué’ que le Noir d’Afrique : entendez qu’il est plus près du Blanc.... pour beaucoup d’Antillais cette situation n’est pas ressentie comme bouleversante, mais au contraire comme tout à fait normale... ils sont plus sauvages que nous” (we have met and still know men from the Antilles who are offended when one thinks them Senegalese. It is that the man from the Antilles is more ‘evolved’ that the Black man from Africa : understood that he is closer to the White man... for many from the Antilles this situation is not understood as strange, rather as completely normal... they are more savage than we) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 20-1). The gradations of blackness in *Peau noire, masques blancs* imply a lack of unification of colonized people within his works and reveals the complexity of colonial racism. Fanon’s later focus on Algerian and African liberation in *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* and *Les damnés de la terre*, as well as his decision to self-identify as Algerian, may reflect his repudiation of such a thought process.

### **Thesis description, methodology, and structure**

The process of writing this thesis involved numerous close readings of Frantz Fanon's three works *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*, and *Les damnés de la terre* followed by reading the work of other scholars both on postcolonial theory in general and also on Fanon's works. Rather than identifying the interplay between racism and sexism, Fanon focuses on race at the exclusion of gender, thereby effacing the colonized woman's presence in his works and hence denying both her input and importance in working against colonialism. The way in which Fanon's gender binaries mimicked the racial ones of colonialism creates an ironic blind spot in his writings that involves a new subaltern in the form of the colonized woman, rather than of the colonized person of the past.

In this thesis I adopt a Judith Butler perspective based on gender performativity in order to see how this influences the depiction of colonized women. In essence, how we act and interact within society relies strongly on society's expectations of us. Fanon's colonized woman behaves by subscribing to or subverting the roles laid out for her in his books. As Simone de Beauvoir would read his books, the colonized woman becomes a woman just as surely as she was born female (13) and this is established in Fanon's works through a patriarchal orientation.

This purpose of my work is to find where and how Fanon excludes women in his declarations of the need for equality, and how these exclusions affect a reading of his works through a gender lens. Some critics, such as Homi Bhabha, argue that Fanon's books do not address gender issues, but rather that these issues are casually and unintentionally overlooked because Fanon decided "to site the question of sexual difference within the problematic of cultural difference [despite the fact that this] often



simplifies the question of sexuality” (123). These critics do not discuss Fanon’s exemption of sexual difference within his identity and psychopathology chapters of *Peau noire masques blancs*, but it is this very silencing of women’s voices and effacement of their presence in the first place that reveal their lack of self-identity in a colonial world.

Chapter one is titled “The absence-presence of women in Fanon’s writings” and focuses on his false inclusion of women throughout his three books. The language throughout the three works *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne*, and *Les damnés de la terre* remains patriarchal and occasionally disparaging towards female contributors to his revolution. Just as the métropole justified its conception of the colonies as inferior by altering or denying their presence in history, so Fanon’s colonized males transfer inferiority to women by silencing and effacing the female subaltern’s presence within the books, and by the males of Fanon denying female agency in order to assert dominance over a further subjugated group: women are sub-subaltern, so to speak. The complexity of such a denial of agency requires multiple layers of oppression from denying women a metaphysical presence – effacement – to not speaking for them and disregarding the importance of their words when they do – silencing.

Chapter two, “Mimicry and the new subaltern,” details Fanon’s reinforcement of a gendered subalternity while deconstructing the racial subalternity. Gender oppression in Fanon’s books is similar to the colonial, racial oppression that he deconstructs throughout his three books. My study of Frantz Fanon’s *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne*, and *Les Damnés de la terre* reveals an unacknowledged microcosm of the very same dominant/domineered binary that he strove

to eradicate from the political (post)colonial world of the time. The subjugated colonized man is the very same that, in turn, adopts the dominant role to reinforce a new subaltern in the form of the colonized woman.

The colonial family social structure is a metaphor for revealing the truth behind the Europe's Civilizing Mission's corrupt and uneven exchange between the colony and métropole. Representing the father is the métropole that presumably provides military protection and religious salvation in exchange for resources from the colony/mother. This same paradigm can be applied within the very indigenous communities that are subjugated with the colonized father/man further suppressing the colonized mother/woman, with just as socially disastrous results as the colonial/métropole dynamic.

Chapter three, "Hierarchies of power," recounts the portrayal of the colonized woman in Fanon's texts as only existing in terms of her binary relationship to a man. The binary relationships constituting the colony/métropole dynamic create identities through direct opposition to others to which one is "hierarchically inferior" and can only act in favor of (Spivak 27). The limits imposed by such dualistic systems do not allow for the subjugated person to ever truly escape from the limitations imposed by its domineering other in order to escape and transcend it. Indeed even by completely severing ties with the métropole, Fanon's colonized person will try to function within a society whose every system has been defined through and in direct opposition to the métropole in a desperate, futile bid that only reveals that he or she can never truly escape it. The only recourse left to Fanon's colonized man is to imitate the system to create new binaries that allow him to subjugate yet *another* other, in this case the colonized woman. This dual suppression

creates yet another layer of power that the critic must first identify and then analyse before working towards understanding how the subaltern exists within Fanon's works.

I also look toward the identity of the male amongst the binary systems of identification. This is because I ask, if Fanon's colonized woman is identified through her relationship with a man, then how do readers look at and compare women that are defined against men that are, themselves, stratified in terms of their own subjectivity, agency, and identity? I will address four specific male "others" that appear throughout Fanon's works: the colonized "Noir," the educated "Noir," the colonizing European living in the colony, and the colonizing European living in the métropole. Each of these *types* of man falls hierarchically higher on the colonial social ladder. Fanon separates these men through their racial categories of "Noir," (Black), and the "European," but he also discusses the differences witnessed between the Western-educated "Noir" and the Noir who never left his country in the first place.

Chapter four is my conclusion titled "The future of the colonized woman," wherein I ask, if the colonial revolution calls for violence as stated in *Les Damnés de la terre*, then does the gender revolution require the same? As Donna McCormack writes, *L'an V de la Révolution Algérienne* provides "cultural and social mechanisms through which change can be achieved" (280). It was published two years prior to the *Damnés de la terre* and I wonder if Fanon was disillusioned in a social revolution after years of witnessing colonial exploitation. The increased extremism of Fanon's final work coincides with more instances of overlooking the colonized female in his books, and a more urgent need for the reader to actively seek her out in them.

## **Conclusions**

In fairness, one must consider Fanon's culture and environment in order to avoid fully condemning a man for not having a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective decades before its existence. If Fanon followed the options available to him to escape the colonial system, then it seems inevitable that he perpetuated the image of a female subaltern by retaining the patriarchal systems of his time. He was educated in the Western system and thus was instructed in the argumentative style of his oppressors. This was the path taken by the majority of writers at the time, but that does not mean that modern analyses of his works cannot point out the holes in his argument in much the same way he pointed out holes in arguments favoring European colonialism. By reading through Fanon's writings and his discussions for the struggle for freedom, critics can see which elements of the métropole/colony dialogue have been adapted to reinforce the colonized man/colonized woman binary. I dissect his microcosm to witness the perpetuation of systems of inequality in Fanon's books.

Much of what the thesis analyzes involves the blind spots Fanon created in his work. Reading into Fanon's silences and effacements, be they consciously done or not, raises two issues. Firstly, that unveiling silences involves creation that may not include sensitivity to the time the works were written. Fanon was speaking at a time and to a people who were distinctly aware of colonialism and its racial consequences, and his language is specifically geared towards this audience of our past and his present. Both Martinique and Algeria were colonies of France during his time, and his writings on colonialism often focused on the racial rather than the sexual issues in these countries. It is perhaps unfair to expect Fanon to be aware of or sensitive to a contemporary feminism, yet in 1949 de Beauvoir had published *Le deuxième sexe*, in which she describes how

women can live outside of the very gender binaries that Fanon not only accepts, but reinforces.

Secondly, this thesis makes the assumption that the reader's analysis can add to the importance of the original works as well as highlight the importance of the silences. Identifying and analyzing the silences and effacements of the colonized women in Fanon's books allows readers to interact with them in new ways. This does not detract from their strengths of Fanon's pioneering thoughts on colonialism, indeed it allows even deeper levels of engagement with his thoughts and witnessing of colonialism and social history.

## Chapter One

### The absence-presence of women in Fanon' writings

With his disclaimer of “Nous n’en savons rien” (I know nothing of her) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 145), Fanon can erase any culpability of not including or empathizing with the colonized woman in his works by creating a “blind spot for numerous scholars who have, themselves, continued to erase the black woman from Fanon’s texts” (Kalisa 9). He establishes an absence-presence of colonized women in his work through a false inclusion of her throughout *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne*, and *Les damnés de la terre*. It is unfair to condemn Fanon for writing his books in French, as he was speaking to an educated community and thus French facilitated this communication; my intent is not to condemn a man for writing in the style of his contemporaries, rather to point out his selectivity in assimilating a colonial hegemonic mentality with regards to women when he strove so fully to deconstruct the racial one. Fanon states that “Parler une langue, c’est assumer un monde, une culture” (to speak a language is to assume a world, a culture” (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 30), and thus his use of French also facilitates an acceptance on the part of the French speaking intellectuals of his time that would recognize his education, and therefore, his authority. Fanon buys into assuming the male as norm throughout his works, with an occasional overt inclusion of women that highlights the instances in which he does not. The question this raises is whether critics can hold a man accountable for failing and in fact reinforcing a gendered power dynamic while working against a racial one.

This chapter details how Fanon reinforced female subalternity by establishing a false presence of women within his works. Firstly, Fanon affected a writing style that assumes the male as the norm, and thus generally excludes women except for in the moments in which he specifically mentions her. Next I question whether the instances in which Fanon includes women actually constitute a true presence, followed by a section where I focus both on Fanon's silencing and effacement of women – as I do throughout this thesis – and how they often go hand-in-hand. I then continue by juxtaposing how Fanon depicts interracial relationships when the black man or woman is involved, and the negative imagery and stereotypes involved in these portrayals. The last way in which Fanon's arguments create a false presence of the colonized woman is through her depiction as a tool serving both the European and colonized men.

### **The male as norm**

While readers should note that the French language inherently places the male as dominant within the context of gender<sup>1</sup>, Fanon's word choice and argument style is itself illuminating at times with regard to what he deemed the norm. If something is the norm, then anything that does not fall within that scope is by proxy anti-norm, or abnormal. This othering causes the inferiorization of those not included in the norm by the very people who established it. As Gayatri Spivak states, these others are a “deviation from an ideal” (27) and ergo often regarded as inferior. The normative subject of Fanon's writing is a masculine one and one of which the heterosexual male is the optimal representation. Fanon ignores the sexual oppression inherent in creating an abnormal out of a group and works to fight against this same oppression in racial situations using what Bell Hooks

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in the case of a plural group including one man and a thousand women, the French language calls that the group be depicted with masculine plural subject pronoun and that any adjectives qualifying it would also be masculine and plural, despite the minority of his role within it.

describes as “terms that suggest it is only oppressed ‘men’ who need freedom” (qtd. in Lane and Mahdi 10). Fanon makes use of universal nouns such as ‘le Noir’ or ‘l’homme’ (the black man or the man, respectively) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 6) in his writing, but critics can often interpret it in context as being universal of *men* rather than of *man*. There is a distinct difference between man as representative of humans in general, and men as a group that excludes women. Often the context in which these potential universals appear lean towards the male equivalent, and it is through this false inclusion of women in his works that Fanon reveals a propensity towards patriarchal argumentation.

Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting cites Joy James’ explanation that “Masculinism can share patriarchy’s presupposition of the male as normative without its antimfemale [*sic*] politics and rhetoric” (11), allowing for a more neutral interpretation of the writing of Fanon. However, this defense still posits a male normative that inherently portrays the feminine as non-normative, and therefore this defense cannot claim the agency that normativism allows. Indeed, James’s argument continues, “even without the *patriarchal* intent some works may replicate conventional gender roles” (qtd. in Sharpley-Whiting 11, my emphasis), which supports the very argument that author intention is not the only oppressor of the subaltern. Fanon may not intend to exclude women, for in fact writing “les hommes et les femmes” each time he chooses to speak of people may have seemed repetitive to him, but oftentimes “homme” could easily have been replaced with “personne,” and Fanon’s choice seems to indicate a subscription to the patriarchal focus on masculinity. He states that “chaque fois qu’un homme a fait triompher la dignité de l’esprit, chaque fois qu’un homme a dit non à une tentative d’asservissement de son



semblable, je me suis senti solidaire de son acte” (each time a man has allowed the dignity of the mind to triumph, each time a man has said no to the enslavement of his people, I felt connected to his act) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 183). However, he directly follows this statement with a section in which females are not included in these acts of solidarity. Fanon wrote three paragraphs in a row beginning with “Je n’ai pas le droit, moi homme de couleur, de...” (I do not have the right, as a man of color, to...) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 185), in which the substitution of “homme” with “personne” (someone/a person) would have established an inclusion of women in a section where he spoke about revolutionary solidarity.

Many of Fanon’s arguments about colonialism and racism involve the subconscious acceptance and perpetuation of the false inferiority of the colonized people, as when he refers to “tout peuple colonisé – c’est-à-dire tout peuple au sein duquel a pris naissance un complexe d’infériorité, du fait de la mise au tombeau de l’originalité culturelle locale” (all colonized people – that is, all people who have internalized an inferiority complex due to the destruction of the original local culture) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 14). Yet he also says that while “On a vite dit: le nègre s’infériorise. La vérité est qu’on l’infériorise” (One has been quick to say that the black man inferiorizes himself. The truth is that someone else inferiorizes him) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 121). Ergo the inferiority complex, while internalized and perpetuated by the colonized people, originates from an outer entity decrying them as abnormal. If he rails against this instance of colonial norms creating a subaltern, then the irony of his patriarchal writing becomes ever more apparent because he is in essence reinforcing this same inferiority complex on the part of the colonized woman, in relation to the colonized man.

“L’homme” or “le Noir” can both be used as universal nouns including both males and females. While many people such as Homi Bhabha see the use of these terms as referring to “a phenomenological quality of humanness, inclusive of man and woman and for that very reason, [one that] ignores the question of gender difference” (123), the use of the masculine as the prescribed norm causes readers to rely on context to determine whether and when women are specifically included in the universal.

Ambiguity allows women a place, but I see a difference between when Fanon says “tout peuple colonisé” (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 14) and “l’homme colonisé,” wherein “peuple” always inherently includes men and women, and “homme” can mask patriarchal focuses behind layers of context and false inclusion, and thus does not always allow women a place. Fanon does not write for women, he does not seek their liberation, nor does he allow them a role outside of how she can help the black man be free because he states outright in *Peau noire, masques blancs* that for what and for whom he writes is the black male and his desires (5-6):

Vers un nouvel humanisme...

La compréhension des hommes...

Nos frères de couleur...

Je crois en toi, Homme...

Le préjugé de race...

Comprendre et aimer

...

Que veut l’homme ?

Que veut l’homme noir ?

(Towards a new humanism...

The understanding of men...

My brothers of color...

I trust in you, Man...

Prejudiced against for race...

To understand and love...

...

What do men want ?

What do black men want ?)

He is talking to fellow men he deems his brothers, and readers can only assume he means his fellow colonized men. However, Fanon was one of the Western-educated males who navigate a fluid place between the colony and métropole to be a “demi-dieu” (semi-deity) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 15). With the capitalization in the fourth line of the Man, Fanon puts his faith in men to bring about the new humanism without the conditions of inferiority that colonialism entails. He states “notre but est tout autre: ce que nous voulons, c’est aider le Noir à se libérer de l’arsenal complexe qui a germé au sein de la situation coloniale” (my goal is entirely different: what I want is to help the Black to escape from the complex arsenal that has taken hold through the colonial situation) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 24). However, by not speaking to both brothers *and* sisters, or asking what she would want, Fanon is at worst excluding her from the dialogue of liberation and at best, assuming her needs are encompassed by those he covers when speaking of men. He writes to his black brothers, to the black Man, and separates black men and their wishes from those of men as a whole.

The context in which ‘l’homme’ and ‘le Noir’ appear in Fanon’s writing generally indicates extremely (hetero)masculine behavior such as lusting after white women because “‘enragés de cet humiliant ostracisme, mulâtres du commun et nègres n’ont qu’une pensée dès qu’ils sont en Europe: assouvir l’appétit qu’ils ont de la femme blanche’” (enraged about this humiliating ostracism, mulattos and blacks think only one thought as soon as they arrive in Europe : to satiate their appetite for the white woman) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 56) and representing such sensuality (“Pour un nègre [on pense] au sexe” [for a black man {one thinks} of sex]) enough to drive white women mad (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 131, 138). Both of these instances of using “nègre” exist within a context of male behavior, and this indicates that Fanon excludes women from the word. His use of a universal term for being black in reference to the “colonized male in particular indicates that racial identities intersect with sexual difference” (Bergner 77) and that sexual identities are overshadowed in his works by the racial ones. This association between “Noir” and “nègre” and sexual desire always existed within a heterosexual context that worked to exclude women, for Fanon did not leave room for homosexuality in his works other than to explain the homophobia of a white man (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 127). Fanon posited that a white man’s fear of the black man resembles that of the white woman who secretly desires the black male, but as homosexuality has no real space within Fanon’s text, critics can assume that any relationships mentioned in his works are of the heterosexual variant. Ergo, if a “nègre” or a “Noir” desires a woman, then these terms must be in these instances representing only men. If the colonized “hommes” are chasing after white women like lustful dogs because “le souci le plus constant de ceux [hommes de couleur] qui arrivaient en France

était de coucher avec une Blanche” (the most prevalent worry of those [men of color] who arrived in France was to sleep with a white woman) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 58), then clearly the term “homme” is not inclusive of women because they would not and cannot desire someone of their own gender within Fanon’s writings.

Fanon occasionally distinguishes women from men by writing about “d’hommes et de femmes” (of men and women) (*Les damnés de la terre* 162) as separate entities, which makes readers question in which instances, if ever, the masculine universal includes women when they are not specifically mentioned. Fanon focuses on race at the expense of gender in his call for freedom, a fact that explains the far from favorable view with which he does write about the colonized woman when she is included.

While Fanon does not explicitly claim the colonized male’s superiority over the female who is also colonized, he does refer to this possibility. In an argument he stages between the man and woman of color following her rejection of a black man in favor of a white lover, the black male can allude to his superiority to the white lover, though his remark will quickly be shot down by the woman: “Et quand on lui objecte que des Noirs peuvent lui être supérieurs sur ce plan [de finesse], elle allègue leur laideur” (and one when objects that black men can be superior to them, women claim their ugliness) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 47). However, critics must wonder at which point Fanon’s subaltern female will internalize the same inferiority complex that ‘le nègre’ suffers from colonialism, its subsequent racism, and being black (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 90) with this constant verbal barrage reminding her of her inequality. Indeed, Fanon admits that “c’est parce que la négresse se sent inférieure qu’elle aspire à se faire admettre dans le monde blanc” (it is because the black woman feel inferior that she aspires to be admitted

into the white world) (*Peau noire, masques blancs*, 48). If Fanon's woman of color can suffer from the same inferiority complex as the man of color, then it seems interesting how Fanon's language choices reinforce her place as a subaltern in *Peau noire, masques blancs*.

There is one exception to the masculine normative in Fanon's first work. The only chapter dedicated to black women in *Peau noire, masques blancs* is called "La femme de couleur et le Blanc" (33), and it "is the only one... that does *not* posit the black man as the universal example of black subjectivity," says Bergner (82). However, one must wonder if that is strictly out of the necessity to avoid ridiculously using a masculine normative term to relay feminine issues. I will cite caustic language towards this imagined female subject later in this chapter and focus for now on the use of the masculine norm. Bergner is quick to identify the use of this masculine term to open the only chapter dedicated to women, revealing the dominance of men over women even within a language context and a context ostensibly dedicated to women.

Although many colonies were already patriarchal before the intrusion of colonialism, the métropole did not work to efface these gendered institutions while they had control, and indeed it often contributed to them. As Sharpley-Whiting so rightly asks, "was not the colonial project itself envisioned by European colonizers as conquests over, penetration into, other bodies and lands, in masculine and feminine terms?" (15). The adaptation of this gender binary in Fanon's writings does not allow for a more favorable future for the colonized woman with regard to the colonized man's treatment of her any more than it did for the colony's treatment by métropole. The masculine normative of Fanon's writings does not allow women an equal space within his works.

She is unable to find herself within the very nouns of “Noir” or “homme” whose supposedly universal qualities should include her, yet whose contextual existence within the Fanon’s books fight for her exclusion. If the colonized woman is automatically the anti-norm because of her femininity, and she is most commonly referred to with a masculine normative terminology, can she truly exist without a negative portrayal within a work that prioritizes masculinity?

### **Is the colonized woman even present?**

As indicated, readers rarely find the colonized woman within Fanon’s narrative, leading us to question if her appearances constitute an actual presence within the work. If one finds, as Kalisa states, “a certain level of ambivalence in the way Fanon himself writes the ‘gender’ of the colonized female” (2), how should this compare to the passion with which he calls for the freedom and acceptance of the colonized male? Fanon does not focus as strongly on the liberation of women, despite occasionally in *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* mentioning their contribution to the revolution. As mentioned above, Fanon dedicates a solitary chapter to colonized women in all of his works with “La femme de couleur et le Blanc,” but his language and voice in this chapter differ significantly in the comparable one regarding the colonized male (“L’homme de couleur et la Blanche”). I would argue that women’s physical presence in the text does not indicate an equality, especially when one can compare the measly eighteen pages of “La femme de couleur et le Blanc” to the entirety of Fanon’s books. This is not to say that Fanon ignores the colonized woman throughout the rest of his works, for he does mention her, but that he rarely enters into a specific discussion about her and that in his instances of inclusion she does not merit the understanding and compassion afforded the colonized

man. Kalisa posits that “the woman gradually disappears from the text” (Kalisa 13), yet while Fanon does put less of an emphasis on the colonized woman in his later works, it is these absences in his writing that reveal how Fanon’ perceives her worth, and thus they merit as much analysis by critics as the instances in which he does specifically write about her.

Aside from her occasional appearance such as with regard to her usefulness in the fight as discussed in *L’an V de la révolution algérienne*, the colonized woman remains absent or overshadowed by the colonized man within Fanon’s texts. The contradiction of creating a false inclusion of the colonized woman and her agency creates a specter that inhabits a space within Fanon’s works without every constituting an actual presence. Her absence despite an occasional appearance in Fanon’s texts as a result of the colonized male’s overshadowing of her does not allow the colonized woman the same freedom, agency, or respect afforded her male counterparts within the revolution, or even a post-revolutionary society as imagined by Fanon. Fanon’s description of her selfishness in her relation with the white male, as discussed later, or her service to the black male do not allow her the autonomy to become her own person within Fanon’s narrative. Her ‘presence’ in his writings serves so that Fanon can again focus on the racial consequences of colonialism without acknowledging the gendered ones. The areas in which these specters exist are often in conjunction with depictions of racial relationships, such as when Fanon focuses on how the woman of color interacts with people of her own or a difference race, rather than on the fact that these other people are generally males. The racial significance of these situations overshadows sexual significance in way that precludes any real focus on females and their presence. And without this



acknowledgement Fanon continues to portray women in such a way that denies them agency and allows him to continue to depict them as negatively as he portrays the male positively.

Colonialism not only brought racial inequality and the métropole's language to the colonies, but also new institutions with which to oppress and objectify of women. Many Westerners would like to believe that patriarchy does not exist in contemporary society, yet the vestiges are still present in media portrayals and our own literature. While de Beauvoir had already published *Le deuxième sexe* in 1949, Fanon was writing was long before feminist theory of the 20<sup>th</sup> century gained momentum. Therefore if Western feminism was not yet extant, the colonial system of Fanon's time likely facilitated the oppression of women in their attempt to control over the native culture of the colonized that the colonizers were in some cases trying to eradicate. As one can witness with the lesser respect Fanon affords educated colonized women despite calling them his "compatriotes" (compatriots) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 38), readers have significantly more racial, social, and sexual barriers to navigate in order to find the colonized woman's voice and presence in Fanon's postcolonial books.

Sometimes Fanon does not seek to merely assume the colonized woman within the universal nouns of 'Nègre' or 'Noir,' but also to actively exclude her from inclusion with the language of his works. He intermittently makes the effort to actively include women in his discussion of racial liberation and equality, such as when he explains that the "nécessité de ce changement existe à l'état brut, impétueux et contraignant, dans la conscience et dans la vie des hommes *et des femmes* colonisés" (necessity of that change exists in the actual state, impetuous and constraining, in the consciousness and life of the

colonized men *and women*) (*Les damnés de la terre* 25, my emphasis), which makes his decision to exclude her even more significant when one notices her absence. Fanon's effacement of her in moments where he chooses not to identify her allows this absence in both his literature and in the identification of women as active participants in the liberation of colonies. This lack of representation of their agency is what reinforces of their own suppression in Fanon's writings. One such instance arises when he quotes a view of the métropole as a communicative connection between themselves and the colony giving the members of the latter "le seul moyen de se sentir encore *un homme civilisé*" (the only way to again feel like a civilized *man*) (Fanon, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 55, my emphasis). One could erase the terms 'un homme' and the sense would not only still remain, but also include women, yet the need to articulate what one would translate at the end as "feeling like a civilized man" rather than "feeling civilized" indicates an exclusion of women in attaining such a feeling. This could be a slippage on Fanon's part, but whether it is intentional or not, the omission remains pertinent. It is important to note that Fanon is here quoting the *colon* – the European living in the colony – and thus revealing that the unequal treatment of women is a problem of both the colony and the métropole, and is a social remnant that has been appropriated by many postcolonial male writers such as Fanon who may indeed seek freedom, but who suffer from the ingrained and ensuing sense of inferiority/superiority that arise from the racial institutions of colonialism and continued to reinforce these superiority/inferiority dynamic through a gendered system of social inequality.

### **Silencing and the effacement of the woman**

The exclusion of women within Fanon's writing reinforces a denial of the agency of colonized women. While it may be unintentional and the consequence of the patriarchal views of his time, this exclusion does indeed exist and takes two main forms within the context of his books: silencing and effacing. The use of the terms 'silencing' and 'effacement' throughout my thesis and other critiques of Fanon's work involves two separate ideas, just as the senses implied by the two terms differ. Silencing becomes an auditory removal of agency that Fanon exhibits by either denying the colonized woman a voice or by speaking for her. Silencing that does not necessarily overlap with the visual and metaphysical form involved in effacement. While this distinction between silence and effacement may not be evident in other critiques, indeed I have often witnessed them use interchangeably, it is an important focus of this one. Both silencing and effacement have the ability to be either active or passive, and are not malicious of their own accords. Where the reader interprets these acts as deliberate and malignant can arrive from previous experience, personal bias, and perhaps even the perceived intentions of the writer.

The effacement of women in Fanon's books takes a myriad of forms, each of which involves a false metaphysical inclusion and contributes to the women's false presence. For example, one question to ponder is whether people can expect protection and respect from any government – colonial or postcolonial – that refuses to enact the legislation that would guarantee this. From here, we can read into Fanon's statement that in a liberated country women "recevront une place identique aux hommes non dans les articles de la constitution mais dans la vie quotidienne, à l'usine, à l'école, dans les assemblées" (will receive an equal place to men not in the articles of the constitution but

in the daily life, work, school, in assemblies) (*Les damnés de la terre* 145). At the time of this publication (1961), French women were able to vote both while in France and in French Algeria, but it was not until 1962 that Algeria would grant women's suffrage. This is in direct contrast with another former French colony, Senegal, that gained independence in 1960 but which had granted women's suffrage in 1945. Fanon does not merely hesitate to grant women constitutional guarantees of equality, rather he flatly refuses the possibility. He denies her political rights in such a way to remove agency and even her metaphysical presence at the legislative level. How, exactly, can colonized women receive the equality required to exert their agency in daily life if they are denied support from the constitution of the very country – Algeria or the other colonies – they may fight to liberate throughout *Les damnés de la terre* and *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*? This incomplete constitution would efface her from the legal code of her country, and therefore deny her, and her agency, any official acknowledgement or protection of her civil rights. This legal effacement is particularly ironic in that it directly follows Fanon's statement that a "pays sous-développé doit se garder de perpétuer les traditions féodales qui consacrent la priorité de l'élément masculin, sur l'élément féminin" (lesser-developed country must be aware of perpetuating the feudal traditions that devote a priority of the masculine element over the female one) (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 145), as a legislative presence would constitute a legal responsibility of colonized women.

Fanon speaks in a patriarchal voice, thereby silencing the colonized woman who cannot speak for herself. In none of his texts does she speak to us. If her words are included, such as when she admits that she will prefer a white man (*Peau noire, masques*

*blancs* 38), they are spoken through the colonized male or the Europeans of Fanon's works, undergoing levels of mediation that filter her voice to suit a new purpose. She is silenced, muted, portrayed to us through the male's voice whenever Fanon includes her interactions. Fanon allows her neither the chance nor ability to speak to us (Spivak 20), and therefore writes as if she requested and endorsed his words on her behalf. Readers cannot know if the colonized woman in Fanon's works would approve of how he represents her, because "We do not hear women's own voices. Instead, we hear of women through others; these *others*, although not named by name, can be deduced to be men. One is forced to see women only through the eyes, words, tone of language as interpreted by Fanon" (Lane and Mahdi 178), and this interpretation works to forward his argument, which may not necessarily be indicative of the colonized woman's. The exclusion of her voice functions to deny a real presence in Fanon's works, and rather adds to the illusion of one.

Fanon bemoans the European colonial's rewriting of African cultural history even to its own people: "Le colonialisme a déployé dans ces régions les mêmes efforts pour ancrer dans l'esprit des indigènes que leur histoire d'avant la colonisation était une histoire dominée par la barbarie" (Colonialism has in these regions employed the same efforts to convince the indigenous spirit that their history before colonization was one dominated by barbarism) (*Les damnés de la terre* 156). He also mentions that in the Antilles, "le jeune Noire... s'identifie... au Blanc qui apporte la vérité aux sauvages, une vérité toute blanche" (the young Black... identifies himself... through the White who brings truth to the savages, a white truth) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 120), and both of these instances rewrites the indigenous people's identity before the implementation of

colonialism. However, Fanon does the same to women by choosing to write about – or deny – her role in the colonial history without including her own voice to assert her presence. This instance of silencing limits how and what we can hear about the colonized woman’s actual desires, and thus “what the work *cannot* say becomes important” (Spivak 28) because the risk of silencing becomes evident when Fanon tries to speak for the colonized woman and establishes her false presence. Because Fanon cannot provide a woman’s voice, his silencing may indeed be unintentional although simultaneously inevitable. However, this silencing still functions so that not only can the colonized woman not speak and assert her own presence in Fanon’s works, she cannot stop him from writing her history in such a way that becomes representative of the restricted role men allow her to play in a colonial society. Moreover, she is written in such a way that one can easily witness the consequences of her rare deviation from said roles, for their occasion reveals a vituperative reaction from Fanon. Again, when a woman of color prefers a white male to a man of color, she is a traitor to not only the second man, but also her country (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 39).

Fanon’s statement that he knows nothing of the woman of color (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 145) becomes controversial because despite having “very little to say” about her (Bhabha 123), he reinforces some extremely simplistic generalizations about her motivations behind pursuing interracial relationships. This effacement of, or blindness toward, feminine complexity as well as that of the colonial and postcolonial dynamic and variation allows the patriarchal hegemony to continue to flourish by ignoring the colonized woman as well as her wishes, her desires, and her social validity. Lane and Mahdi posit that the only way forward from these blind spots is to interpret

them “in light of the far-reaching consequences they have had for feminist readings of his text” (171) so as to overcome the blind spots and allow an area for the colonized woman to assert her own voice and image in the future. Her false presences within Fanon’s books manifest in a handful of ways; she can be a mother, daughter, lover/wife, traitor, or revolutionary, yet all of these fit within a specific mold and deny the many complexities that constitute a proper person. These blind spots exist not only within Fanon’s works, nor solely amongst the colonized males, but also within in the colonial system itself. The consequences of colonialism do not only affect the male, and what “happens to the colonized female is that she becomes not only absent-present in the eyes of the colonizer but also... often in the eyes of the colonized male as well” (Kalisa 4). Kalisa mentions this absence presence arises from an ambivalence to the colonized woman, however the amount of exclusions implies that this ambivalence does not, indeed, exist. Rather, Fanon occasionally remembers to include the colonized woman in his works, although many times it is through mediating her words, stereotyping her life, and belittling her choices. Consequently, her presence is often unsatisfactory when compared to that of her male counterpart because it is so lacking. Fanon rarely includes her, but when he does he simplifies her into a series of stereotypes that often rely on a masculine counterpart (as discussed in chapter three of this thesis). The colonized man can strive to assert his agency as Fanon does because he is whole – he has desires and thoughts, insecurities and agency – yet the colonized woman lacks this personification. And thus, through the blind spots created by simplifying generalizations, Fanon’s work continues to efface the colonized woman.

Effacement does not manifest only as an actual absence in works, but can also take the form of simplistic and stereotyped imagery that does not allow for the perception of variation or of individual and group agency. Throughout all three books, Fanon alternates between three main stereotypes when he includes women in his discussion: a tool or medium through which colonialism is upheld or subverted by the men she serves, a traitor to her country when she engages in interracial relationships, and a binary opposite to the man to whom she is most closely associated. When she loses her individuality to become nothing more than a negative stereotype, the colonized woman loses her presence within Fanon's depiction of society. Despite his occasional inclusion of the colonized woman in his works, Fanon often effaces her by reducing her to these roles as either the other of the colonized male or by how she can suit him, and therefore denying her the opportunity for the autonomous existence necessary for agency. The binaries shall be addressed in chapter three and her utility shall be discussed in a later section of this chapter, but both serve to create the absence-presence that in effect effaces the woman from colonial writings and society by dehumanizing her and rendering her reliant on the role that men relegate to her in the (post)colonial world.

One of the most evident ways through which the readers may counteract this effacement of the colonized woman in Fanon's writings, is to separate the female from the restrictive imagery of stereotypes surrounding her existence in the colonial society, rendering nothing more than a mythological 'presence.' The colonized woman in Fanon's works must become more than the traitorous vixen lusting for social validation through a sexual relationship, she must become more than the medium for interracial understanding between men, she must become what she is: an autonomous, self-defining,



and self-determining human worthy of a voice and presence within both her community and the larger world.

### **Double standards in interracial relationships**

The double standard in Fanon's portrayal of interracial relationships involving the colonized male or the colonized female reveals at worst, an active misogyny and at best, a misplaced lack of empathy for women on the part of Fanon. Fanon argues that the black woman only engages in an interracial relationship in order to improve her own socio-economic status or at least "éviter de régresser" (avoid regressing) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 44) and this lack of pure intention or desire does not allow for an authentic love to exist. Fanon explains the métropole's rationale of colonialism through their view of the colonized man as "l'ennemi des valeurs... le mal absolu" (the enemy of values, absolute evil) (*Les damnés de la terre* 29), which is the very way he describes the 'traitorous' colonized woman in her desire for a European man. He depicts her as a self-indulgent traitor to her race, motivated solely from the economic, social, and political improvement in her station that can only come from the white man. Her selfishness, according to Fanon, makes authentic love between them "impossible" (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 33) and therefore she is doomed to remain inferior to others because she retains the distasteful qualities of self-motivation and betrayal. Even those who settle for a black man only do so because they realize that they cannot and should not marry the white man. The black or métisse woman, in Fanon's words, would risk anyone and anything in her wish for "la blancheur" (whitening), and therefore cannot be trusted by the black man. He could be a victim of her obsessive need to climb the social ladder of a

colonial society, and this fear precipitates the anger her betrayal causes amongst the black man.

If readers are to take Fanon's words as truth, then the woman of color who marries a "Noir" becomes, in essence, a failure to herself and in her wish to "sauver la race" (save the race) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 44) of her people (in her own view, at least). This is not a selfless desire, for it is still motivated by her wish to have "un peu de blancheur dans sa vie" (a bit of whitening in her life) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 34). Furthermore, another motivation of the educated woman of color living live in France is that she has "échappée" (escaped) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 38) the man of color who would have been her husband had she stayed at home. "Blaming women absolves men from the painful reality that they are also partners in this construction" (Lane and Mahdi 177) and ignores the mistreatment of the black woman in a colonial society by her own countrymen. The move to the métropole and marriage to a white man constitute both a physical and emotional liberation, for if Fanon's woman of color were to marry a man of color, she would have suffered through a lifetime of fearing divorce at his mercy (Fanon, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 92). Thus, the woman of color seems damned in Fanon's eyes no matter who she marries: she will either be a traitor unworthy of authentic love or she is a self-stated failure who lives in constant duress.

This same bitterness and accusatory language do not appear in the "L'homme de couleur et la Blanche" in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, which refers to colonized men involved in interracial relationships with European women and is a significantly more sympathetic and understanding chapter. While taking René Maran's semi-

“autobiographie” (autobiography) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 52) of Paul Veneuse as a case study of men of color in interracial relationships, Fanon reveals that black men are able to accomplish what women of color never will: whitening to the point of deserving European love. Indeed, though he is also born in the Caribbean, Veneuse’s education allows him to have “que l’apparence” (but the appearance) of being a “nègre” (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 55). While race will always separate the black woman from her European lover, according to Fanon, the black man desiring the European female is not only deserving of her love, but also “needs to be loved” (Kalisa 15, my emphasis) because “il est naturel [qu’il aime] comme l’Européen [et] l’Européen n’aimant que l’Européene” (it is natural that he loves like the European man [and] the European man loves only the European woman) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 55). His relationship with white women while in the métropole is not traitorous, for as Rey Chow states, the colonized man “is allowed to go in and out of his society-to mate with white women, for instance, without having his fidelity questioned” (18), whereas the black woman is not afforded this integrity. The two chapters of *Peau noire, masques blancs* that focus on interracial relationships juxtapose each other not only physically in the books, but also in Fanon’s treatment of them and acknowledgement of the validity of these relationships. Fanon creates an antithetical imagery and motive for these interracial relationships that deny the sexual agency of colonized women who choose their own partner, be he colonized or not.

The accusatory and somewhat hypocritical language of Fanon indicates that he does not grant colonized women the respect or potential of being truly in love. In his eyes, her love is always self-motivated and Fanon is incapable of seeing any instance of

interracial relationships with the colonized woman as pure because he sees her interracial relationship as an inherent betrayal of her countrymen. However, the fact that this does not go both ways and that the colonized man is not betraying anyone in his relationship with the white woman creates a double standard in Fanon's treatment of the people of color in interracial relationships and therefore underscores the inferior status that Fanon grants women. This "lack of consistency in his argumentation when analyzing the behaviour of black men and black women in their choosing of sexual partners" (Lane and Mahdi 179) does not make concessions or exceptions for women as he does the males, for Fanon posits that social climbing is every black woman's ulterior motive in entering into an interracial relationship. The women of color in interracial relationships "voulai<sup>ent</sup>, en référence à un profond désir, se changer, 'évoluer'" (wanted, with regard to a profound desire, to change themselves, to evolve) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 48). This evolution obviously does not cause a physical change in the woman, but this whitening is a social one that makes them better.

The climax of this hypocritical stance arrives when Fanon writes that the black man who has lived in the métropole has but the appearance of being black, and rather thinks and behaves like a white, European man. Fanon thus says to him, "L'Européen n'aimant que l'Européenne, tu ne peux guère épouser qu'une femme du pays où tu as toujours vécu, une fille du bon pays de France, ton vrai, ton seul pays" (The European man only loves the European woman, you can hardly marry anyone who is not of the country where you have always lived, a daughter of France, your real, your only country) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 55), indicating that the black man who rejects his country and race does so for love and necessity and not for traitorous reasons. The educated

black man who has lived in France or attended university has no choice to but identify as white and European and therefore love the white, European women, yet the black or *métisse* woman who may also be educated cannot ever become white and therefore must always betray their people. Fanon mentions that “nous connaissons beaucoup de compatriotes, étudiantes en France, qui nous avouent avec candeur, une candeur toute blanche, qu’elles ne sauraient épouser un noir [...et] telles attitudes ne sont pas rares” (I know many compatriots, students in France, who have admitted to me with candor, an open candor, that they would not know how to marry a black [...and] such attitudes are not rare” (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 38). The Martinican women that Fanon is speaking of are obsessed with relieving their blackness through marriage with a white man. They are educated in France, yet remain black Martinicans and know the only way to escape this inferiority is through marriage with a white man. Fanon not only mentions that he knows many women of color who are studying in France, indeed his sister was one such student (Cherki 19), but that this point of view is prevalent in them, and as such asserts this feeling as a generalization for all women in the chapter “La femme de couleur et le Blanc.” Indeed, Fanon’s woman of color “can aspire to an unattainable whiteness only by aligning herself with a white man, whereas [the black man can] successfully internalize [...] a white European identity through intellect, acculturation, and class privilege,” (Bergner 84) something that will always be denied to even the most educated and *sophisticated* black woman. Fanon remains “resolutely rigid and simplistic regarding the native women” (Lane and Mahdi 175) despite his call for unification of l’homme in the fight for liberty, a use of the word ‘homme’ that clearly does not include women. His different use of language in these two juxtaposed chapters reveals “a concerted – if

tortuous – effort to confine this pathology [of a secret wish to become white, or at least elevate social status through marriage to a less-black individual] to black *women*” (Lane and Mahdi 175). Interestingly, Fanon reveals a man of color who marries a European does, at least in some measure, receive a “reconnaissance que Hegel... a... décrite... En m’aimant, elle me prouve que je suis digne d’un amour blanc” (recognition that Hegel described... In loving me, she proves to me that I am worthy of a white love) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 51). The difference between the situations is that the man of color is worthy of a European woman’s love, and that she only inspires him to recognize this, rather than improving him herself. However, his race remains important because while she can love him, she does so “malgré [sa] couleur” (despite his coloring) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 94). The negative portrait of the woman of color who marries a white man, therefore, functions to efface her by creating a stereotype that does not grant the respect of loving without an ulterior motive but rather, subjects her to the status of a traitorous vixen unable to transcend her selfish limitations and exist as an actual complicated human being in Fanon’s works. The fact that Fanon made this chapter representative of all women of color marrying a white man is extremely alarming given that his own mother was “a mulatto woman whose maternal forebears were Alsatian” (Cherki 7). Perhaps because his European ancestry stemmed from a white woman, rather than male, Fanon was able to excuse her heritage and thus his own enough to see a justification in his own marriage to a European woman. This juxtaposes directly with the assumption that the man of color can become essentially European, and therefore through his education is always worthy of white love and relationships only serve to affirm his inherent worth. This point of view is especially potent when readers realize that Fanon,

himself, married a European woman named Marie-Josèphe Dublé (Cherki 19), and thus this view seems almost a sort of self-affirmation that he is not the traitor he would be if he were female.

Ironically, and perhaps accidentally, Fanon contradicts the idea of “pure” interracial love between the black man and the white woman untouched by ulterior motives later in his writing when he implies that the black man’s lust for white women arises not from deserving her love, rather from the colonized man’s “Rêves de possession” (dreams of possession) of her and the rest of the colonizer’s claims whenever possible (*Les damnés de la terre* 28). According to this reading of Fanon, the colonized man does not love the white woman for anything other than what she represents to him: his validation in deserving what the white man has. Possession becomes validation in this desire for racial vindication and decolonization. This negates Fanon’s previous presentation of the colonized man’s love for the white woman as a pure, honest, and understandable sentiment because his dreams are “musculaires, des rêves d’action, des rêves agressifs” (muscled, dreams of action, aggressive dreams) (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 36). Therefore his ‘possession’ of the white woman transforms into a physical and assertive conquering of her body rather than a love for her as person. The caustic language reserved for women remains unmatched through the rest of Fanon’s work. He writes stereotypes about her motivations behind relationships that subject her to a sphere of self-involved desire. The white man is not blamed for entering the relationship with the black woman, for according to Fanon she is the traitor to the race and he is but following the prescriptive *exoticization* of the colonized as a victim. If the colonized woman is to be condemned for her ulterior motives in engaging in an interracial

relationship, then the colonized man should be no less at fault. Unfortunately, Fanon ignores this logic because he allows for the possibility of a black man's authentic interracial love, even if it does not always manifest itself in relationships. Conversely, the opportunity for the black woman to feel true love for a white man remains impossible in Fanon's works because she remains a one-dimensional stereotype denied such complex emotions in a portrayal that denies her an actual presence.

### **The female as a tool**

I contest the assertion that only one chapter of Fanon's works is about the colonized female by saying the chapter "l'Algérie se dévoile" refers to women, but the title of the chapter speaks about Algeria rather than an actual woman. Algeria is liberated, Algeria is freed, and the Algerian woman is nothing more than a tool that men use to achieve this. Despite a chapter on how she can aid the colony in its fight for freedom, Fanon writes about how useful the Algerian woman is as a medium rather than as an actual being dedicated to liberation. While Fanon does not explicitly call her a tool, his writing depicts her as something to be used and manipulated by men to serve their purposes. He perpetuates the problem of failing to see and display a subaltern female as fully equal to men throughout his writings. The worth of the colonized woman depends strongly, if not entirely, on her role within the colonial system, whether as a medium for resisting or upholding the colonial system and racial inequality amongst males.

The colonial system thrived on stereotypes and representations of the colonized that allowed the métropole to self-identify as superior. These representations generally existed through metaphors that reduced colonized subjects to inanimate elements that neither exhibited nor merited agency. The Noir "n'a pas de culture, pas de civilisation,



pas ce ‘long passé d’histoire’” (has no culture, no civilization, no such ‘long historic past) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 27). Each country has its own culture and civilization, and the métropole dehumanized the colonized people positioning them as barbaric and bestial, stereotypes that justified their domination and exploitation of the colonies. This racial stereotyping was institutionalized in colonialism through a number of means, and even “Dans le domaine médical, la situation n’est pas différente... Les nègres, eux, ont la puissance sexuelle... avec la liberté qu’ils ont... Il paraît couchant partout, et à tout moment. Ce sont des génitaux... le nègre a une puissance sexuelle hallucinante” (in the medical field, the situation does not differ... blacks, themselves, have sexual power... with the liberty they have... he seems to sleep everywhere and in each moment. They are genitals... the black has a staggering sexual power) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 128). The black man generally was depicted as full of sexual potential that could become a dangerous aggressor and threat to the stability of not only Europeans, but also colonialism itself, because he “représente le danger biologique” (represents biological danger) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 134). Fanon transposed this idea in claiming the worth of the women as wearers of the veil by attributing the importance of the veil, not the Algerian woman, to subvert colonialism because her contribution is replaced by its functionality. She is not even granted the role of working to convey secrets, but of the one wearing the actual object that allows this ferreting of information amongst anti-colonial activists by hiding messages underneath. The veil itself becomes the hider and active contributor to the revolution. In truth, Fanon’s Algerian women were covered and overshadowed by the veil in terms of its importance and activeness in the revolution. The Algerian woman is only as useful as

what she wears, because only those who wore the veil were choosing to side with Algerians over the métropole and play a “rôle fondamental, capital” (fundamental essential role) (Fanon, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 20), in the revolution. She and her worth are associated with the veil just as strongly the man of color becomes the “pénis” (penis) in a colonial society (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 137). Each gender is reduced to a symbol; the man of color is the phallus, the Algerian woman is the veil. They are each replaced by the item most often attributed to them, and the veil then becomes the “symbole du statut de la femme algérienne” (symbol of the status of the Algerian woman) (Fanon, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 19) and of the woman herself. Fanon effaces the colonized woman from history by creating a new image, a new identity, in the form of the veil and it is that metonymic entity that usurps the woman to help in the fight for freedom. It is the veil that hides the revolutionaries’ messages from the Europeans, not the woman herself (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 43), and thus it is the veil that can lead to the success of revolution rather than anything the woman herself can do. If Fanon has announced that this fifth year (an V) is the time to include women in the revolution, then he seems to truly be saying the time has arrived to involve the veil. She loses her role as a tool for revolution because the importance of the veil that hides her both physically and within Fanon’s works supplants her and own her identity is once again metonymically effaced by Fanon, who appropriates the veil as the actual contributor to the revolution. Fanon makes veils more active than women, thereby attributing more political agency to an inanimate object than he does to an entire sex. Indeed, in *L’an V de la révolution algérienne*, the veil represents and replaces the

colonized woman as the main method for subverting colonialism. The veil carries out the struggle, rather than the actual human woman wearing it.

When “la décision est prise, d’engager concrètement l’élément féminin dans la lutte nationale” (the decision is made, to concretely involve the feminine element in the national fight) (Fanon, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 33), it is not a decision to see women as indispensable contributors to the revolution. Conversely, Algerian women remain useful tools whose importance has already been established in creating the racial divide. They mediate between the colonizer and colonized while simultaneously fortifying the divide of racial categories for men as a result of a “sex-gender economy that organizes men into social groups through the distribution of women... so as to construct and perpetuate *racial* groupings [because] white men have access to black women but [black men are] denied access to white women” (Bergner 81, original emphasis). The Algerian woman becomes a valuable asset for men to witness racial inequality and the attempt to eradicate it, but cannot ever be a full participant because her political existence is not legally or officially acknowledged (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 145) even after succession. She is thus replaced, or effaced by, the value of the veil in the eyes of the colonized and European men who attempt to control her. As Fanon portrays her, she either supports the European dominance by pursuing a relationship with colonizers at the expense of a potentially authentic love with the black male because “il vaut mieux être blanc” (it is better to be white) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 38), or she subverts this dominance by working for – never with, as an equal – the black man to overthrow colonialism. While Fanon’s *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* grants an elevation and evolution of the role of women in the revolution, she does not attain the

status of an actual political being with personal agency. It is interesting to note that Fanon states that “la guerre révolutionnaire n’est pas une guerre d’hommes” (the revolutionary war is not one of men) (49) when, in fact, he does not allow women to become more than the medium through which the battle is conducted and won. Just as revolutions are not wars of men, rather waged by them, the Algerian woman is a tool used by both sides to assert and subvert dominance. Yes, she is “au cœur du combat [car] elle atteste de la violence de l’occupant et de son inhumanité” (at the heart of the combat [because] she attests to the violence and inhumanity of the occupant) (49), but being the focus of a battle does not make her an active participant in why or how it is won. The Algerian woman becomes the central tool of revolution, yet does not receive the recognition to be more than that.

The Algerian woman, along with the majority of colonized women depicted in Fanon’s works, becomes nothing more than an “objet de possession” (object of possession) (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 26) by men. Yet while Fanon decries the white man’s misuse of the colonized woman in terms of how the métropole might use her to signify its dominance over the colony, Fanon rarely grants her the agency to become more than an object or tool in the fight for freedom. She is the key to demeaning or liberating a man of color based on her willingness to submit to his love. Both the colonized male and the European exhibit the patriarchal wish to control and manipulate the female subject in order to use her as an instrument for asserting control because they have realized her importance in the community. Indeed, Fanon acknowledges in *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* that she works as the gateway to the community for, in the mind of the white man, “Convertir la femme, la gagner aux valeurs étrangères, l’arracher

son statut, c'est à la fois conquérir un pouvoir réel sur l'homme et posséder les moyens pratiques, efficaces, de déstructurer la culture algérienne" (To convert the woman, to win her over to foreign values, to tear her out of her status, is at the same time to win a real power over the man and to possess the practical and effective means to destroy Algerian culture) (21). The Algerian female becomes the most valuable tool for the colonists in asserting dominance because she gives him the power and tools to destroy Algerian culture once they can convert her to their side. However, her worth for establishing European dominance is not solely through behavioral means of siding with the métropole, but can also be physically achieved through her rape. Sharpley-Whiting claims that "Fanon recognizes the complexities of the issue of rape in the colonial project," and that "Rape functions as a direct violation of the Algerian woman's person and equally to destabilize the Algerian community" (16), for the European dreams of his conquest of her "d'emblée, avec le maximum de violence, possession, viol, quasi-meurtre" (immediately, with maximum violence, possession, violation, almost murder" (Fanon, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 28) possible in order to make the most effective attestation of his superiority. Fanon depicts the rape of the Algerian movement as political and purposeful, always acting against not only her but her country, and therefore creating eliciting the sympathy of readers for both her and Algeria as a whole. Conversely, I find that his view of the white woman's (fear of) rape is significantly less understanding. He attributes this feeling to a secret, suppressed desire on her part: "quand la femme vit le phantasme de viol par un nègre, c'est en quelque sorte la réalisation d'un rêve personnel, d'un souhait intime" (when the woman perceives her possible rape by a black man, it is a sort of realization of a personal, intimate desire)

(*Peau noire, masques blancs* 145) whereas the rape of the Algerian woman is one of her country as well. Because she is the key to Algeria, the European “conquering” of her (Fanon, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 21) can also take the form of a violently physical act in order to assert the dominance of the métropole. When the white man is the perpetrator, then his intentions are far-reaching and politically motivated, whereas the black man’s rape would rather be a wish fulfillment on the part of the white, female individual. The agency in rape remains with the European, even when a European woman is the one acted against, rather than acting. In Fanon’s texts, the political connotations behind the realized rape of colonized women differ from the perceived potential rape of a white woman. The fact that the woman who is acted upon is still the subject to the colonized male’s object creates a distinction between the actions and desire. White men raping becomes a decisive act, while white women being raped involves having others act for her, yet still in accordance with her desire. However, Fanon’s casual attribution to psychosexual desire undermines the potential that the white woman’s rape by the colonized man could be a political statement of defiance against the métropole’s power over the colony just as much as the colonized woman’s rape by the European could represent submission to it.

The portrayal of the Algerian woman as a tool for establishing or denying political repression is not only within the microcosm of each nation, but also can exist in regard to individuals and their situations. For example, an Algerian man refusing to bring his wife once they have each been individually and specifically invited by a white man to a function becomes an instance of resistance while bringing her would be tantamount to surrender. This stems directly from the European’s dream of raping and conquering the

Algerian woman, and Fanon recounts the personal conflict involved when he says that “Venir avec sa femme, c’est s’avouer vaincu, c’est ‘ prostituer sa femme,’ l’exhiber, abandonner une modalité de résistance. Par contre, y aller seul, c’est refuser de donner satisfaction au patron, c’est rendre possible le chômage” (To come with one’s wife is to confess to being beaten, to ‘ prostitute one’s wife,’ to make an exhibit of her, to abandon any semblance of resistance. Conversely, to go alone is to refuse to give a boss the satisfaction and to possibly become jobless) (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 22).

While acquiescence to the white man’s invitation implies a surrender that would become representative of the Algerians as a whole, the defiance becomes a personal one with potential for personal consequences such as losing a job. However, in each instance the Algerian woman does not actively participate in what the her husband does or what he is stating by bringing her, she is merely along for the ride that is his political determination in denying or submitting to the request (and thus power) of the colonizer and the métropole that he represents.

The most valuable tool that colonized women have at their disposal remains their sexuality, suggests Fanon in his portrayal of her. By conquering her sexually, the métropole declares its superiority over the colony, for the European’s “brutalité et... sadisme sont d’ailleurs soulignés” (brutality and... sadism are moreover highlighted) (Fanon, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 28) and reinforced through this act.

Conversely, by winning her back and employing her to subvert colonialism, Fanon’s Algerian male declares his refusal to remain subject to such a system and so he chooses to “engager concrètement” (decidedly engage) (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 33) her and the veil she wears in spite of his previous hesitation because the Algerian woman

could be “torture jusqu’à la mort” (tortured to death) (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 31) if she is caught. The Algerian woman is reduced to her body, and this body becomes her identity, thereby denying her agency and freeing Fanon of any need to treat her as a complex, multidimensional person in his works. Rather she serves as a tool in the struggle for freedom. Just as the colonized man internalizes an inferiority complex after the European’s constant assertion of racial superiority (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 7, 14), the denial of a woman’s agency becomes internalized and relegates her contribution to the war to that of an extremely useful element of men’s strategic arsenal in establishing or denying colonial dominance. The women who side with the métropole accept their Algeria’s lot as inferior to Europe, and those who fight for the colony inhabit an area determined by their perceived usefulness at the hands of the colonized men.

Fanon claims the importance of women in revolutions through a number of means. Firstly, she is the gateway into the colony when the métropole controls her, and thus her conversion to the revolution is just as powerful (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 21). Secondly, she is able to hide messages more effectively than a man because the veil that covers these revolutionary communications is so strongly tied to her (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 19). Consequently, the revolutionaries have recently decided to include women in the revolution (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 33) because Fanon claims that the colonized have realized her importance and therefore want to engage her in decolonization. If a revolution is not a war of men, but rather has women at its core – “au coeur du combat” (at the heart of the fight) (Fanon, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 49) – and if that ‘woman’ represents the medium of liberation through her association with the veil and its use in hiding revolutionary messages, then it



does not seem a far leap to assume those who sustain it should reap the rewards. However, the majority of Fanon's works do not allow for such an interpretation and he incessantly works, actively or passively, to deny her agency by relaying her use as a medium for the wars men wage. He writes of her as a tool that the colonized can use to communicate without ever acknowledging her contribution as a person because it is the veil she wears that is so useful. The colonized woman does not exist in Fanon's works as an autonomous being and therefore is incapable of wanting to overthrow colonialism for herself; only when she is persuaded by her countrymen to work for their fight does she seek to end the system of oppression. However, this thwarted system is strictly the racial one that colonialism created and not inclusive of the existing gendered one, and thus she does not call for the freedom of her sex in Fanon's works because men do not convince her of its necessity and she does not act outside of male wishes in Fanon's writing.

### **Conclusion: Shrinking roles**

Fanon describes the process of decolonizing as "le remplacement d'une 'espèce' d'hommes par une autre 'espèce' d'hommes" (the replacement of one species by another species of men) (*Les damnés de la terre* 25), while rarely allotting women their own autonomous place within it. A few lines later he writes about the colonized people's fear of the future after revolution in creating a new "conscience d'une autre 'espèce' d'hommes et de femmes" (consciousness of a new type of men and women) (*Les damnés de la terre* 25). Readers here realize that women are not included within his use of the word "homme" and have to be specifically mentioned to be included. Perhaps Fanon's own fear of women attaining their own place in the new, decolonized setting is what causes Fanon to produce the absence-presence of women in his works. Women appear in

his works in a number of ways that deny their agency: as lovers of colonized males, as traitors to their race when they engage in interracial relationships, or as tools within the revolution. Therefore, while Fanon calls for decolonization and equality for men, he in essence transposes the inferior standing that colonized men have historically been accorded by the métropole onto the colonized woman.

The first chapter of Fanon's canonical work *Peau noire, masques blancs* is entitled "Le Noir et le langage" (The black man and language) (13), a title that reveals the importance he places on language within revolutionary discourse. However, the very language he uses to demand freedom for 'l'homme' reveals a significant exclusion: that of the colonized woman within this universal noun. In addition to regarding masculinity as the norm, Fanon often ignores or even purposefully denies the presence of the woman in his narrative, at least in a positive light. Additionally, the double standard between how Fanon writes about men and women and the depiction of women as assistants rather than autonomous beings with their own independent form of agency further raise the issue of Fanon granting women a supporting role in the fight for freedom. Perhaps Fanon does acknowledge their need for freedom from the colonial system, but he does not allow them the freedom from – indeed, he subjugates them to – the oppression of women upheld through a patriarchy.

The irony of Fanon's opening line in *Peau noire, masques blancs* wherein which he proclaims the importance of language in the world with the statement "Nous attachons une importance fondamentale au phénomène du langage" (13), raises an interesting conundrum in which the very language that he prioritizes creates an absence-presence dynamic in reference to women. If language is as important as he states, then can one not

assume that he chose to depict women the way he did with careful intent? He believes in language's import, yet the way in which he uses it to write about colonized women in his works creates a new subaltern.

The following paragraph of Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* begins with "Le Noir" (13) and here we see a distinguishing along racial lines. Yet as the work progresses, readers can easily perceive a distinct lack of femininity in the characteristics of the 'Noir,' such as when 'Le Noir' lusts after white women (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 56), an exclusion that behooves a deeper reading through a lens of gender representation and understanding. The radically transformed black man who returns from the métropole eliciting a godlike reverence from his people (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 15) differs drastically from the idea that the most Europeanized, educated black woman can do in the colony is to play the integral role of a glorified mule in the fight for freedom when she hides revolutionary messages under her veil (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 43).

Considering the reduction of the role of women throughout the books reveals some potentially frightening consequences. Rather than becoming more tolerant and inclusive of women as he moved from *Peau noire, masques blancs* to *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* and on through to *Les damnés de la terre*, Fanon reduces not only women's role, but their potential as he continued to write. Fanon's first published work, *Peau noire, masques blancs* from 1952 dedicated an entire chapter to interracial relationships between the colonized woman and the European man (as discussed above), a relationship that he saw as incapable of producing "l'amour authentique" (authentic love) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 33). In this work, the colonized woman is 'present,'

she even has her own chapter, but she is not respected, she is not worthy of love, and she is not redeemable. In 1959's *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*, it appears that Fanon also grants the colonized woman a chapter through "L'Algérie se dévoile," but does he really? His chapter title speaks about Algeria and how this country "se dévoile" (unveils) (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 15), an action that refers to colonized women and the symbol – the veil – often attributed to them by colonizers, but replaces her with Algeria. Is the veiled woman representative of the country, or the country of her? Is it fair to replace her with the country when the country itself also includes the colonized men? She becomes effaced by her substitution with a country (Algeria) that represents men just as strongly as it does women. The woman is not only replaced by the veil, she is replaced by the Algeria she fights for that can equally – or even more so, depending on Fanon's writing – represent the very man that uses her to achieve his own independence and then neglects her afterwards. "Le Noir" does not necessarily include women, but "Algerie" always remains inclusive of men. To be fair, the 'Annexe: les femmes dans la révolution' that Fanon includes at the end of the chapter "L'Algérie se dévoile" refers specifically to "les femmes" (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 47), yet this is but a subset of the actual chapter of "L'Algérie se dévoile," and it is in this one that he mentions that women are at the heart of the revolution. Fanon has reduced the woman's role from an extremely accusatory portrayal focused solely on her relationship with European men to a chapter on how she can best be used as a medium between socially and racially unequal men for the freedom of the *inferior*, a role she then assumes in the event of his success. This issue becomes glaring when readers examine, and then realize, that in his last published work, 1961's *Les damnés de la terre*, Fanon does not dedicate a

single chapter to women. Yes, women are included throughout the other chapters of each work such as when he specifically mentions the act of mobilizing “les hommes et les femmes” (men and women) (*Les damnés de la terre* 145), but not nearly to the extent of the man, and usually in the context of her relation to him. Readers must wonder why the role of women shrank with each of Fanon’s works, and why his portrayals of her, while becoming slightly less venomous, never portrayed her as (potentially) autonomous or (actually) inherently valuable as a man. Perhaps Fanon decided to avoid caustic language in his later works by no longer calling them traitors and rather involving them in the revolution, but excluding the colonized woman almost entirely is not the most efficient manner.

In *Les damnés de la terre*, Fanon acknowledges, once again, the importance of language by focusing on how the European *colon* uses language in his logic to “déshumanise[r] le colonisé” (30) without ever realizing how he himself uses language to write about women. Whilst the métropole actively denied the humanity of the ‘savages’ of the colonies in their justification of the behavior inherent in colonialism by rewriting their history and insinuating that “le départ du colon signifierait pour [les colonisés] retour à la barbarie” (the departure of the colonists would signify for [the colonized] a return to barbarism) (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 154), Fanon repeats the cycle in his linguistic treatment and portrayal of the colonized woman. He was not alone in this treatment of women, for male writers of the time also represented women as tools to be manipulated by men in a dehumanizing effort that refuses women agency. The masculine normativity does not allow for a fully realized presence of the colonized woman in his writings, because he often silences or effaces her in order to continue to portray her in

ways that further his argument. Her absence-presence suits Fanon's narrative needs with the same efficacy that the colonized woman suits the needs of the Europeans and colonized people using her as a medium for oppression and revolution, respectively. The colonized woman is either a product of the colonial system that prioritizes the European and betrays the colonized man or she works for the colonized man against the métropole. Because she never works for herself, nor exists as an autonomous being in Fanon's texts, the reader must constantly navigate the role of the colonized woman to understand how she is portrayed and hence exists in Fanon's (post)colonial society. Only through analyzing where and how her false presence occurs can we understand how she was – perhaps unintentionally – excluded from Fanon's books. The colonized woman is denied her own full humanity because this can only be realized through a self-creation of identity outside another's control and influence, something that cannot exist within the patriarchal hegemony of Fanon's writings.

Fanon begins the conclusion of his last work, *Les damnés de la terre* in much the same style as he writes the introduction to the first, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, by speaking to his “frères [et] camarades” (brothers [and] comrades) (*Les damnés de la terre* 235) and calling for them to join him in the fight for liberation. While both these terms – brothers and comrades – could be considered gender neutral on their own terms, the use to which Fanon puts them makes them anything but. Fanon sporadically takes the time through his works to distinguish men and women, yet in his call for revolution he chooses “frères” rather than also calling for “sœurs” whom he places at the heart of the revolution. And how exactly can female readers feel included as a ‘camarade’ when Fanon spends much of his work alternatively silencing or effacing the colonized woman, and insulting

her whenever she is present in his works? *Peau noire, masques blancs* opens with Fanon asking what the black man wants and *Les damnés de la terre* ends by asking these brothers to join him, yet the presence-absence of the colonized woman remains just as poignant in these remarks as they do throughout the rest of his writing.

## Chapter Two

### Mimicry and the female subaltern

The deconstruction of colonialism's racial systems takes up the majority of *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*, and *Les damnés de la terre*. This deconstruction occurred through Fanon's focus on the institutions and mechanisms of oppression that ranged from changing and denying the history of the colonies (*Les damnés de la terre* 174), European control over the colonized female and her acceptance of him (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 21), and racial binaries that failed to acknowledge middle grounds such as mulatto children (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 47). However, while Fanon succeeds in advocating the eradication of racial inequality by debunking the bases on which it stood after centuries of colonialism, he also adopts and perpetuates a discourse that subjugated another subaltern: the colonized woman. The transposition of socially constructed inequality based on gender in addition to race created an inherent paradox, for this gender-based oppression shares many of the assumptions of the racial one Fanon strove so eloquently to de-authenticate. Through his portrayal of the rarely present female in his works, Fanon fabricates a dual oppression as he reinforces an image of a colonized female inferior to the colonized man, who was historically deemed inferior to the colonizers. How exactly did this dual oppression of the colonized woman come about? Fanon himself states that the "efforts du colonisé pour se réhabiliter et échapper à la morsure colonial, s'inscrivent logiquement dans la même perspective que celle du colonialisme" (the efforts of the colonized to rehabilitate himself and escape the colonial bite, rewrites itself logically through the same perspective as that of colonialism) (*Les damnés de la terre* 155), and these methods generally involve



changing history and devaluing the oppressed to the extent of denying their humanity (*Les damnés de la terre* 154). Although patriarchy existed in the colonies even before the métropole ever controlled them, it brought new means with which to institutionalize a gendered inequality. Therefore, the efficacy with which the métropole dominated the past, present, and future of colonies is similar in regard to the treatment of colonized women in the colonial period. Fanon did not deconstruct gendered binaries in the same vein that he did racial ones in his pioneering argument against colonialism. Fanon's deconstruction of racism is now not only incomplete, but rather obsolete until a fully-realized gender revolution revitalizes it.

### **Imbalanced power discourse and secondary oppression**

The main critique that I, from the perspective of 21<sup>st</sup>-century gender studies, have of Fanon's works remains his failure to see, or at least acknowledge, the intersections of gender, race, and class in colonial power relations. Fanon focuses solely on race and social hierarchies, and particularly on how race affects them. Fanon's power relations of gender are a paradigm of the colonial power relationship, and this inequality is just as *socially* constructed as the racial relations he discusses throughout his works. Because of this, Fanon's treatment of the colonized woman mimics the historical racial treatment of the métropole towards the colony. Women are, however, "doubly effected" (Spivak 28) because the colonized woman's oppression arrives at the hands of a dominator (the colonized man) that is, himself, oppressed (by the European colonizer), and therefore the reader must sift through yet another layer of sociocultural history when attempting to see how this dual oppression arose.

As I have stated previously, Fanon rarely includes women in his writings, and only then to suit a specific purpose. If one understands Fanon's writings – as Henry Gates posits – as a “symbolic text [that] uses the native as mediator of European desires” (463), then one can easily see how the use of the native as a colonial tool translates easily to the representation of women as instrumental versus inherently valuable or a “mécanisme de résistance” (instrument for resistance) (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 45), as discussed previously in this work. Even when present in Fanon's texts, women are rarely written about with a positive, sympathetic, or even neutral fashion, and they are never granted agency. The women in Fanon's writings are either tools of male revolutionaries or traitors to colonized men when they sleep with white men (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 46); they are depicted as slaves to colonial thinking (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 21) or slaves to their own lust and lack of reason. Fanon dedicates an entire chapter of *Peau noire, masques blancs* to psychoanalysis, which Bergner describes as “a theory of subjectivity that examines the construction of gender and sexuality, agency, and the linguistic and symbolic processes of representation” (76) purely to reveal how sex affects racial relationships in the colonies. However, Fanon does not ever acknowledge the fact that gender intersects with race and class outside of its coincidental links to them. For example, Fanon states that “Le nègre symbolize le biologique” (the black man represents biological aspects) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 135), because he is hypersexualized by the métropole and reduced to his genitalia, rather than recognized for his personhood. Fanon attributes this dehumanization to race, as well as the power associated with the phallus (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 128), because “le nègre est le génital” (the black man is genitalia) (*Peau*

*noire, masques blancs* 145). In fact, Fanon juxtaposes the racial superiority of whites with their “sentiment d’impuissance ou d’infériorité sexuelle” (feeling of weakness or sexual inferiority) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 129), but if whites are more powerful in colonial society, then it must be read that Fanon is placing gender below race in terms of their influence on power and social status. Fanon’s overlooking of gender – purposeful or accidental – creates the dual oppression, for he never acknowledges that race, class, and gender are related. Fanon cannot see how racial power relations are affected by those of gender. Indeed, he does not depict his treatment of women in his texts as socially influenced, but rather as her own fault for having betrayed her people by involving herself with a European. Fanon uses psychoanalysis as an explanation of race through the reduction of black men into sexualized beings that do not merit recognition as actual people without acknowledging its inherent and inextricable connection to gender theory instead focusing on sexuality. The focus on race over gender effaces the importance of the latter and how it interacts with race. Fanon describes the sexual stereotypes of the black man, not in terms of how this hypersexuality affects gender relations, but rather in favor of how it affects racial ones. Bergner attributes this ignorance to how Fanon “sees gender as subsidiary to ‘cultural difference’” (84), which she interprets as race, and Fanon seems to take for granted that gender does not affect the very society he is trying to change. Fanon works tirelessly to deconstruct every angle of the racial colonial discourse, and yet can brush off an entire group by saying that “Nous n’en savons rien” of black women (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 145). Fanon does not justify or explain his lack of knowledge about the colonized woman to the reader. Not only does he not know about the colonized woman, not only does he not understand her, but he does not make an

effort to outside of the stereotypes he perpetuates. Fanon ignores the importance of gender and its connections to racial relations in colonial societies because his focus on race not only takes his full attention, but overshadows and ignores any acknowledgement that colonialism affects gender relations as well.

Fanon's lack of focus on gender relations and how they intersect with racial and classist ones insinuate a patriarchal view that gender equality does not merit the same deconstruction as the other two issues. Through a patriarchal perspective, "the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant" (Spivak 28) and consequently perpetuates power inequality. Fanon subscribes to this patriarchal style in his writings and accepts an imbalance of power relations between the colonized male and female while simultaneously rejecting the racial exploitive relationship between the métropole and colony. However, by not acknowledging gender and focusing solely on race and how it affects class, Fanon does not have to acknowledge that gender inequality, and thus avoids any responsibility to fix it. "Fanon manages to sidestep a discussion of how gender differences are created and sustained under colonialization" (Lane and Mahdi 177) in a way that not only detracts from the importance of gender and equality, but keeps the discussion on race in three books that suffer strongly from a lack of gender equality. However, since these racial and classist inheritances from colonialism are interconnected with gender, its exclusion seems a severe blind spot in Fanon's writing.

Gaining power and autonomy in one area does not mean that subalterns will be able to retain them in all aspects of life. Fanon's texts attempt to displace the dominant white man with the formerly colonized male, but unfortunately, the end of the colonial period will not herald the end of all its systems. Infrastructure remains to be inherited by

those who represent the new power – whether it is political, architectural, or sociocultural – with the “*même perspective que celle du colonialisme*” (same perspective as colonialism’s) (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 155). Guha posits that the “same class or element which was dominant in one area... could be among the dominated in another” (qtd. in Spivak 26), and the colonized man of Fanon’s works is such a dominant/dominated example. The colonized woman who becomes the oppressed under this male does not have her own sphere of dominance, rather she remains doubly subjugated by an Other (the colonized male) that adopts the systems that held him in place to do the same to her. If “Fanon fails to see the effects and connections between global colonialism and gender” (Lane and Mahdi 178), yet adopts them in his construction of a female subaltern, then one must wonder whether intentional or accidental oppression is the truer evil. In other words, is colonialism at fault for the sub-subaltern or is it those who use the remnants of a colonial system they sought to dismantle to ensure their own dominance over another without realizing their hypocrisy? If this hypocrisy is unnoticed and unintentional, then Fanon merely did not realize how he reestablished a female subaltern through his works in the same way he debunks the historical reasoning behind the colonized male’s inferiority.

If, however, Fanon’s effacement and silencing of the colonized woman is a conscious act aimed at establishing a new dominant in the form of the colonized man through the reiteration of the female subaltern, then the dual oppression occurs as a defense mechanism by the colonized male, such as Fanon, who is exploited by the métropole. This historical oppression is at once social, political, economic, and cultural in a way that justified the substandard treatment of both the colony and its inhabitants,

and that was “destructive to his masculine identity since he is made the recipient of the dismembering gaze that is normatively the male prerogative” (Bergner 80). This denial of gendered prerogatives enforces an inferiority on the colonized man that is historically attributed to his female counterpart. When society makes males feel inferior, this can be seen as an emasculating denial of power and agency that the colonized male in Fanon’s books deals through colonialism. He deals through the establishment and reinforcement of an inferior that he can himself ‘dismember’: the colonized woman. Fanon mentions that the “clitoris est perçu comme pénis en raccourci” (clitoris is perceived as a shortened penis) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 144). This psychoanalytic view dehumanizes the female in the same way as the colonized male is reduced, but exacerbates the situation because she does not wield the only power the colonized male has in the colonial period as her “penis” is both metaphorical and shortened. This creation of a sub-subaltern and treatment of her is not questioned or condemned in a society that revels in the creation of a subaltern as long as that subaltern is not the group they belong to. Racism and classism overshadow the gender divide in Fanon’s books in a way that cannot bring equality to all people and all levels of life, rather to a select few that he addresses specifically when talking to his “frères.” “Fanon has either failed to engage the abuse of colonized women by colonized men or on some occasions openly applaud [*sic*] colonized men’s subjection of their women” (Lane and Mahdi 170) because the creation of an inferior black woman implies a superior black male. Sexism still exists in his writings as witnessed through his treatment of women throughout his works, and “such a decontextualized analysis of black femininity re-creates the structure of the colonialist discourse Fanon successfully deconstructs” in his works (Bergner 83). Fanon inextricably relates colonization to

domination and exploitation when he mentions that the doctor in the colonies “fait corps avec la colonisation, avec la domination, avec l’exploitation” (becomes one with colonization, with domination, with exploitation) (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 123). This hybridized being works against the colonized people and constantly connects racism and classism with the inferiority complex developed by the colonized male.

Fanon debunks the thinking behind the superiority of Europeans over colonized males. However, control and exploitation become the dominant paradigm with regard to the colonized woman; she can be a tool or she can be a traitor. Even the white woman, who socially would have more power because of her white skin and European ancestry, loses her sexual agency in Fanon’s works because she is at the mercy of the black man’s sexual power. He can ruin her because for “un soir qu’elle couchait avec un nègre, perdit la raison ; elle resta folle pendant deux ans, mais, guérie, refusa de coucher avec un autre homme [ parce que ] une Blanche qui a couché avec un nègre accepte difficilement un amant blanc” (as soon as she sleeps with the black man, she will lose all reason ; she will be crazy for two years, but, healed, will refuse to sleep with another man [because ] a European woman who has slept with a black man will grudgingly accept a white lover) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 138). The interplay over the white and black skin colors and female and male genders, respectively, reveals the fluidity behind the classist system of colonialism. The man of color can never be equal to or better than the European man, but he can wield control over the white woman. Her “perversion” at his hands reveals the power he can have over a white woman, and it is then her sex, rather than her race, that places her in a position to be subservient to him. Indeed Fanon denies both types of

women the respect and credit they require to exert agency over their own lives and actions.

### **The Civilizing Mission, revisited**

These claims mimic the very ones colonialism established with regard to the need to protect colonies and the people in them against themselves. La Mission Civilisatrice: the Civilizing Mission depicted the barbarism of the colonized people in order to justify the métropole's intrusion into the colonies under the guise of saving them religiously with their "besoin de catholiciser l'âme négrière" (need to convert the black's soul to Catholicism) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 116), and socially with the progressivism ascribed to the West. Fanon mentions in *Les damnés de la terre* that "La culture nationale est, sous la domination coloniale, une culture contestée et dont la destruction est poursuivie de façon systématique" (National culture is, under colonial domination, one contested and whose destruction is continued in a systematic way) (174). Fanon cannot create a subaltern using the very systems he discredits without opening himself up to a questioning.

Fanon rewrites the history of the colonies as one based on socioeconomic and political exploitation justified by cultural misrepresentation. France's depiction of the colony as desperately needing the protection of the strong métropole and becoming reliant upon this dominant figure to save them from themselves became the way of thinking before revolutions revealed the narcissism behind such thinking. The Europeans considered the natives barbarians, and themselves saviors. The people in the colonies internalized this point of view at a personal level, according to Fanon, for "Le Noir se sent naturellement *en contact plus étroit avec les 'animaux inférieurs' qu'avec l'homme*



*blanc qui lui est tellement supérieur à tous égards*” (The Black naturally feels *closer to the ‘inferior animals’ than with the white man who is truly superior to him in every way*) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 141, original emphasis). Not only did the métropole protect the colony from ruthless invaders – all the while denying its own involvement in similar actions – it saved them from their perceived barbarism through “Tous les efforts... pour amener le colonisé à confesser l’infériorité de sa culture transformée en conduites instinctives; à reconnaître l’irréalité de sa nation” (all the efforts... to get the colonized to confess to the inferiority of their culture transformed to instinctive needs; to recognize the unreality of their nation) (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 173). According to colonial ideology, Christianity saved their souls, European armies saved their land, and all the while European systems saved the nations from falling into wanton chaos brought about by inefficient regulations.

Instituting European religion and infrastructure became the basis of the Civilizing Mission. And out of this system a new type of family was born: the colonial family. This metaphorical representation of a powerful, protecting male (i.e. the métropole) and the reliant mother that, while endowed with plenty of resources that can help both her and the family (the colony), needs his help and protection to properly do so became the idea for the colonial relationship at the national level. The métropole seemingly protected the colony from itself and other nations (that would try to establish their own colonizing dominance) and in turn required access to the colony’s resources, yet this became much more than a reciprocal relationship of goods and services and transformed into centuries of exploitation and oppression. This relationship existed because “la situation colonial arrête, dans sa quasi-totalité, la culture nationale” (the colonial situation stops, almost

completely, national culture” (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 174). This occurred through the internalization of this false reliance because “Quand il n’y a plus le ‘minimum humain’, [sic] il n’y a pas de culture” (when there is no ‘minimal humanity’, [sic] there is no culture) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 148). This leads colonized people to believe that they are able to exert their own agency to protect or defend themselves. However, Fanon does not eradicate the metaphorical colonial family in his books, but merely revises it to suit a new, less metaphorical, father/mother dynamic: the colonized man and woman, respectively. The colonized men in Fanon’s works use the colonized women’s resources, such as their ability to hide messages from the colonists under their veils (Fanon, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 43), in order to suit their own purposes. Protection of a people does not necessarily entail respecting them, and the history of colonialism and its Civilizing Mission is ample evidence in and of itself.

Fanon’s adaptation of the colonial family is significantly less metaphorical than the one consisting of the métropole and colony. Fanon explains that fathers pass sociocultural morals to their sons (*Les damnés de la terre* 27) in order for them to continue to retain their vitality in a changing world, yet women have no role in this action and therefore cannot change how it affects their lot in society. After entering into marriage, the colonized woman assumes one role and that role is one of a supporting mother and wife. Not only must she respect and bow to her husband’s wishes, all the while granting him and the family any resources she can (namely her womb), she must provide the emotional balance for the family, for each person has his or her role. “La mère colonial défend l’enfant contre lui-même, contre son moi, contre sa physiologie, sa biologie, son Malheur ontologique” (the colonized mother must protect her child against

himself, against his self, his physiology, his biology, and his ontological Unhappiness) (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 154) in such a way as to counteract centuries of internalized inferiority and instead reinforce the agency of her child who will one day surpass her and continue his father's pattern of denying a female her agency. She removes the self-inflicted barriers to her son's rise as a dominant male in a system where he will one day join the ranks of those denying her equality. The colonized woman of Fanon's text plays the role of a doting and supportive mother who damns herself and her gender for generations to come. In a way, she becomes her own oppressor just as the colonized man did to himself (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 14) during his own period of oppression.

The colonized mother does not truly exist within Fanon's works outside of her role to nourish her child, just as the colony nourishes the métropole with its resources. The aforementioned absence-presence of the colonized women witnessed throughout Fanon's writings reveal that "nowhere do we hear the woman's voice, and nowhere is her agency free from the patriarchal "gaze"" (Lane and Mahdi 179). She keeps her roles as defined by patriarchy: that of wife and mother, and nothing else. Even outside the archetypal colonial family, the lot of women does not improve much in Fanon's books. The role of colonized women found during the colonialism remains extant throughout Fanon's anti-colonial discourse with some minor adaptations that perpetuate the denial of her agency. Fanon writes that the "vie d'une femme algérienne ne se développe pas selon les trois temps connus en Occident: enfance – puberté – mariage; la jeune fille algérienne ne connaît que deux étapes: enfance-puberté, et mariage" (the life of an Algerian woman does not develop outside of the three Occidental times: childhood – puberty – marriage;

the young Algerian girl knows only two stages: childhood-puberty, and marriage) (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 92-3). While Fanon compares the Algerian woman's two-part life to the three-part one of European women, the only thing that actually changes is the combination of the historically separated stages of childhood and puberty into one. This reduction of her life defines the Algerian woman entirely by the sexual role she can play. She can either be a daughter who suffers from an incestuous Oedipal complex (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 144) after she undergoes puberty (Fanon, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 93) and is therefore completely defined by her sexual potential, or she can be an actual sexual object for a man as lover or husband (Fanon, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 97). The colonized, Arabic woman's life is determined to represent a meager two stages, an insufficient account to any group that would claim agency. As discussed in the following chapter, these two eras of her life become characterized by her role in her biological, nuclear family and her marital one. Her life never consists of a time away from the patriarchal system because she never exists in a world where she is not subject to either her father or lover/husband, and thus Fanon's depictions of traditions continue female oppression.

Fanon acknowledges the role of the Algerian man in creating a tool out of the Algerian woman, for she is "transformée par l'homme algérien en objet inerte, démonétisé, voire déshumanisé" (transformed by the Algerian man into an inert object, devalued, and thus dehumanized) (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 20). Therefore, her own countrymen continue the cycle of refusing agency to the Algerian woman that began long before colonialism, and thus even in a postcolonial world she will not attain it for she does not yet inhabit her own world, rather theirs. She becomes a tool to be

manipulated and controlled by men much in the same way the colony was by the métropole, all through a façade of benevolent protection for their own good. Bergner suggests that Fanon's writings reveal "his own desire to circumscribe black women's sexuality and economic autonomy in order to ensure the patriarchal authority of men" (81), but Fanon's acknowledgement in this case of the dehumanizing of the Algerian woman by Algerian men can actually be read as a unique recognition of her treatment. This does not indicate that Fanon wants to change how the Algerian woman is used by men, because he still often speaks towards her usefulness as a tool, and thus this instance may in fact just be a slippage within his aversion towards speaking of her inherent value. As mentioned in the previous chapter, romantic love does not exist between the white man and black woman of Fanon's works, for that love would demand a respect that was never granted. However, it is not solely the respect of the white man that the black woman can never receive, rather also her countryman's. And as Fanon is the one writing her story, it is perhaps only he who denies her an authentic love. If society "est véritablement l'ensemble des familles," (is truly the whole of families) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 121) and those families are paternalistic, then a society must inevitably become so as well. They feed off each other much in the same way that race, class, and gender do to create a reason for a controlling influence – this time at the hands of the colonized men. The colonized man/husband becomes the dominant that justifies his oppression over the colonized mother/wife through an imposed inferiority that never grants respect, autonomy, or agency to those who it claims to protect.

## **Conclusion**

Just as the métropole historically erased the significance of the colony by describing the native group as “savage” and in need of saving by a more educated, sophisticated, benevolent force who could bring them “une vérité toute blanche” (a white truth) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 120), Fanon silences and effaces the colonized woman through her absence-presence in his works. This inferior group, characterized by its own weaknesses, is the colony/mother and therefore the métropole/father is thus the only one who can save this group from itself. Fanon, subconsciously or not, adopts this theory in his works by creating a weak and corrupt colonized female and a sympathetic colonized male, even when she is at the heart of a revolution, it is really her usefulness that is valued rather than her active participation. Through an effacement of all that would qualify her as humane and deserving of her own proper agency, “It is then clear that rather than a dialogue between the black man and the black woman, Fanon’s arguments can be read as paternalistic and chauvinistic concerning the black female” (Kalisa 14). This treatment creates a new superiority that the colonized male can have in dialectic opposition with the inferiority he bestows upon the colonized female. Just as she is unworthy of authentic love with a European, just as she cannot become more than a medium through which men act, woman becomes the subaltern in a system adopted and adjusted by a former subaltern to suit his needs. The colonial systems established not only a racist hegemony, but also a classist and sexist one as well; and unless these intersections are acknowledged, Fanon and his texts are incapable of acting outside of these very hegemonies when implementing their own racial revolution in a postcolonial world.

## Chapter Three

### Hierarchies of power

Within the system of othering that the métropole established, Fanon works to deconstruct everything that system is based on. He rejects the classification of a barbaric native that can neither become educated nor tamed, he rejects the idea that the black man can never deserve a European wife and life, and he rejects the idea that the dichotomies of race remain valid. The racial binaries mimicked the subject/object ones wherein the colonized male of color was the inferior to the colonizing white man. Fanon's colonizing European retained the power as the superior of the colonized male's "objet [et remet] l'homme [colonisé] à sa place" (object [and puts] the [colonized] man black in his place) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 71). Fanon debunks the race binary simply by acknowledging the inherent middle ground by separating "'excessivement brun' [homme], mulâtres... et nègres" ('excessively brown' [man], mulattos... and blacks) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 56) and the scales between people of different countries (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 20-1) in order to undermine the dualistic system that made the colonized man feel inferior and allowed colonialism. Yet Fanon ironically fails – or refuses – to do the same in the gender binaries. Fanon works to subvert the racial dichotomy that dictates colonialism, yet does not realize the gender dichotomy that he preserves. Colonialism "se caractérise par la dichotomie qu'il inflige au monde" (characterizes itself through the dichotomy it inflicts on the world) (*Les damnés de la terre* 32), and Fanon unwittingly adopts this formula by juxtaposing the colonized woman with a male figure whenever writing about her. He depicts her through a series of stereotypes based on her use value, rather than intrinsic value, the roles she can play in

society, and as the new colonized mother in a way that denies her an actual presence in his works, discredits her inherent value, and therefore denies her agency. Fanon deconstructs racial binaries while simultaneously reinforcing gendered ones that continually place the colonized woman in opposition to a man. She becomes the subject to his object, and Fanon's systematic oppression of female sexual agency denies women the opportunity to choose their own futures, and in turn affects the degree of autonomy she experiences in other aspects of her life. In colonial systems the male, and especially the white male, was granted more sexual agency by a society that does not acknowledge a woman's sexual liberation, and indeed often seeks to exploit rather than respect or even recognize it.

### **Female sexuality and worth**

Fanon states that “tout se passé sur le plan génital” (everything exists via a genital theme) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 127) in his psychoanalytic chapter describing how the sexualized vision of the colonized male determines his lot in the colonial society. According to Fanon, the colonists only see the native in terms of his penis and sexuality in an ignorant and dehumanizing series of acts that render him inferior to them. The black male cannot escape his sexualized image in the colonial system, and Fanon recounts the numerous way that this sexualization affects colonialism through his psychoanalysis in *Peau noire, masques blancs*. Sharpley-Whiting recognizes that it “is particularly around issues of the family, female sexuality, and the body that the most rigid and repressive national codes and laws of regulating gender emerge” (20), and yet Fanon reinforces these very restrictions by demanding that colonized women remain loyal to the colonized male rather than themselves. If her relationship with the white man is in



essence an act against the black man – and conversely her relationship with the black man is an act of solidarity with her countryman – Fanon posits her sexual choices are a reflection her feelings towards the colonized male rather than a personal expression of sexual agency.

Fanon recreates a system of oppression by transposing the sexual exploitation of colonized people as a whole solely onto women. This act does not allow for the colonized women to have their own sexual agency, but rather for them to welcome or betray that of men. In Fanon's works, "women are considered as subjects almost exclusively in terms of their sexual relationships with men; feminine desire is thus defined as an overly literal and limited (hetero) sexuality" (Bergner 77). He dehumanizes them in the same way that colonialism dehumanized the black male through hypersexualization of his body at the expense of his identity. The betrayal of the colonized woman who does not allow a black male to possess her elicits an ire that remains unmatched throughout Fanon's interactions with and depictions of other colonized people. When a woman of color chooses a white man over the man of color, Fanon worries that she will corrupt Martinique upon her return as an educated woman, and likely a teacher (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 38). Her sexual betrayal, in Fanon's eyes, also constitutes a betrayal against the country. If, as Bergner posits, "the value of women lies not in their use but in their possession," (81) then Fanon's desire for the black woman to marry and subject herself to the black male creates a new subject/object dynamic that mirrors the métropole/colony in a new dichotomous relationship built on ownership and exploitation. How else can readers interpret the entirely unsympathetic account of the black woman who seeks to love the white male when Fanon says she is

focusing on “la blancheur à tout prix” (whiteness at all costs) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 39) rather than on an unattainable authentic love (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 33)? No, Fanon does not recognize the sexual decisions of women in his works unless it falls into his account of what is proper, and that is in her coupling with a colonized male. However, even if the colonized woman were to take an appropriate male as her lover, this would be a reflection of him and his superiority rather than of her sexual validation.

Samantha Earley states that ““Because women are valued in male systems only for their reproductive and nurturing functions (that is, because they can produce and take care of families), the locus of their identity rests in their bodies – body, not mind, spirit, or soul, establishes who and what a woman is”” (qtd. in Lane and Mahdi 177). Essentially, women’s value in patriarchal systems rests in the role she plays within them once she becomes a mother. Her womb is what is valuable, rather than her as a person, and therefore her identity is fixed on this physical aspect of her. Fanon adopts this point of view by not only judging the woman of color on her choice of mate throughout “La femme de couleur et le Blanc” in *Peau noire, masques blancs* and by stating the Algerian woman’s life has two stages of in life characterized by her marital status “enfance-puberté” et “mariage,” but also by always describing her in terms of her use to a male. Can she be the dutiful daughter that respects her father and helps her mother run the house, both of which constitute the *enfance-puberté* stage of life? Or, conversely, can she marry a colonized man, bear children – boys especially – and perpetuate this cycle by nurturing a new household as she “protège l’enfant d’un environnement hostile” (protects her child from a hostile environment) (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 154) that readers

can easily interpret as a colonial one? Fanon does not allow an escape from this restrictive characterization, rather he completely buys into it and even condemns the female that tries to escape to a new life.

### **Necessity of a masculine oppositional force**

Through his chapter “La famille algérienne” in *L’an V de la révolution algérienne*, Fanon takes great pains to only depict the Algerian woman through her relationship to another man, whether it is fatherly or sexual. The binaries through which Fanon organizes his chapter never include a mother/daughter or a sister/sister duality, yet he does include a father/son and a brother/brother one. The fact that the only inclusion of women in the headings of this chapter occur through her relationship to her father or husband reveals his idea of her inability to exist or self-determine herself as separate from a male oppositional force, therefore reinforcing her lack of agency within Fanon’s writing.

The relationship with her father becomes the primary intergendered one of the first stage of the Algerian girl’s life (*enfance-puberté*). She is defined by her status as unmarried, and assumes the role of object/possession to his role of subject/possessor. The inferiority that has been internalized by the colonized man now finds a new host in the shame that dictates the life of the Algerian “girl.” Fanon describes how “la fille algérienne a honte de son corps, de ses seins, de ses menstrues. Elle a honte d’être femme devant les siens, elle a honte de parler devant son père, de regarder son père. Et son père aussi a honte devant elle” (The Algerian girl is ashamed of her body, of her breasts, of her menstruation. She is ashamed to be a woman before her peers, she is ashamed to speak in front of her father, to look at her father. And her father is also

ashamed in front of her (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 93). This infantilizing word choice of “fille” is intentional because Fanon is describing a time in a female’s life before she marries, and therefore while she is still in the “enfance-puberté” (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 93) stage of life. This selection recounts the physical development of a girl – or daughter, for that is the role she is playing at this stage of her life – as she approaches adulthood. The following section recounts an incestuous recognition when “le père voit la femme dans sa fille [et] la fille voit l’homme chez son père” (the father sees the woman within his daughter [and] the daughter sees the man in her father) (Fanon, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 93) and acknowledgement of the potential womanhood of a daughter and the shame that arises out of the confusion a girl feels when undergoing puberty creates some alarming potentials for the Algerian woman’s life. If she and her father suddenly have to question their relationship because of her burgeoning sexuality, then the shame that arises from the potentially incestuous relationship deprives her of the ability to define her own markers.

Readers must ask themselves what may happen to this girl/woman if she does not find a suitable husband as she approaches her sexual years and instead remains at home where she cannot remain a girl forever, yet cannot truly escape the *enfance-puberté* stage of life without marriage. This incestuous relationship reverses the Oedipal complex often cited in Freudian psychoanalysis, and with which Fanon would be extremely familiar during his three years working at a psychiatric hospital in Algeria (Cherki 59), wherein the pubescent boy begins to feel sexually attracted to his mother. Fanon cites this theory in the chapter “Le Nègre et la psychopathologie” (The Black and psychopathology) in *Peau noire, masques blancs* wherein the proximity of an adult of the opposite gender

creates a target towards which the children can focus their sexual awakening, yet the perversion of the parent/child relationship causes more anguish than the sexual awakening itself and how the colonized woman must overcome “son double complexe d’Oedipe” (her dual Oedipal complex) (144) because she fixates on both mother and father.

Fanon’s focus on psychoanalysis in an entire chapter of *Peau noire, masques blancs* indicates his familiarity with this concept, and therefore an intentional transposition of the superior adult role to the father rather than mother. Fanon’s description of Algerian society does not grant the colonized daughter a dynamic personality, for she is constantly defined by her role as daughter until she can progress to the second part of her life. The Algerian daughter “n’a pas l’occasion de développer sa personnalité ni de prendre des initiatives. Elle prend place dans le vaste réseau de traditions domestiques de la société algérienne. [Sa vie] ne permet aucun renouvellement” (does not have the chance to develop her personality nor take the initiative. She assumes a place amongst the vast system of domestic traditions of Algerian society) (Fanon, *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 91) in a static stage of life while she waits for a man to marry her and allow her to progress onto the next stage of her life. While unmarried, the Algerian female cannot actually be considered a woman, because it is only through this cultural ritual – as opposed to a biological one such as menstruation – that she becomes a woman. Therefore the female who does not progress into a coupling or marriage remains a *filie*, as opposed to the European female who can be “femmes [avec une] virginité prolongée” (women [with a] prolonged virginity) (de Beauvoir 145). While the colonizing woman does not necessarily need to be sexually engaged to be considered a *femme* – albeit this is

was not necessarily considered normal – she is still capable of being called an actual woman. Although the word “fille” can signify both “daughter” and “girl” in French, readers can always interpret this classification as infantilizing, and in the case of “daughter,” part of a binary in which she is the daughter *of* a man.

Only through marriage and assumption of a wifely role does the colonized woman ever progress to adulthood. While her marriage may initially be seen as a natural progression of her life, or even as a “libération, comme délivrance, comme équilibrage définitive” (liberation, a deliverance, a definitive balancing) (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 92), the colonized woman soon learns that she is unable to escape her role as one side – and generally the inferior side – of a binary force in relation to a man. She will remain “toujours une mineure et l’homme, frère, oncle, ou mari représente d’abord un tuteur” (always a minor and the man, brother, uncle, or husband primarily represents a guardian) (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 92), keeping her in a role of subordination and denying her any autonomy or agency. With his choice of the word “toujours,” Fanon reveals that the Algerian woman’s inferior status to a man is inescapable within the book and within Algerian Arab society, and that no matter what his relationship to her, the closest Algerian man in her life will control her. Her husband’s power over her is absolute, as is her fear of him, for the “facilité avec laquelle le divorce est décidé dans la société algérienne fait constamment peser sur la femme une peur presque obsessionnelle d’être renvoyée dans sa famille. Le jeune garçon, pour sa part, adopte les conduites du père” (the ease with which divorces occur in Algerian society places the woman under the constant weight of an almost obsessive fear of being sent back to her family. The young boy, for his part, adopts the behavior of his father) (*L’an V de la révolution*

*algérienne* 92). The Algerian woman cannot escape this fear, and it devours her personality and further denies her agency, for she cannot stand up and demand it when she has no power in the relationship. Furthermore, even in the event of a divorce the woman would still not have any agency, for she would be sent back to her family to, once again, become socially subordinate to her father within the family archetype-based binaries Fanon recounts. The Algerian woman has not actually left the stage of *enfance-puberté* behind because she can always be put back into it.

Conversely, Fanon does grant some hope of female agency in his closing remarks of the marriage dynamic because divorce “n’est plus automatiquement légalisée. Le mari doit expliquer pourquoi il divorce. Il y a des tentatives de réconciliation. De toute façon, la décision dernière reste au responsable local” (is no longer automatically legalized. The husband must explain why he is divorcing her. There are attempts at reconciliation. In any case, the final decision rests in the hands of the local director) (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 102). Yet despite the new legalities involved in the divorce process, it is still the husband who explains the necessity of the divorce and one can assume that the *responsable local* who makes the final decision is likely male. Therefore, the choice of divorce is still absent in the colonized woman/wife’s life as is any influence over the decision: her agency remains ever absent.

Indeed, the bleak portrayal of marriage as the only means through which to escape the *enfance-puberté* stage of life while remaining perpetually subordinate and terrified of a husband may arise from the fact that the “mariage dans les pays sous-développés n’est pas un contrat individuel, mais un contrat de clan à clan, de tribu à tribu, de famille à famille” (marriage in lesser developed countries is not an individual decision, but a

contract between clans, between tribes, between families) (Fanon, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*), and although he is speaking of lesser developed countries rather than specific colonies, Algeria would fit into the Western classification of this type of country. Because the woman in these countries never had enough agency to even choose who she will marry, Fanon does not grant her much hope within the marriage. This is not to say that every arranged marriage will end in suffering and/or divorce, nor even that love cannot exist within the situation, for Fanon says that the revolutionaries acknowledge that "l'amour existe" (love exists) and therefore are criticizing her plight (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 101), but Fanon still reinforces the very systems that are enforcing subalternity. However, one must take into account that the vast majority of his books do not look at specific women or men, rather at the prevalent archetypes within a system of binary relationships that exist in a (post)colonial society, and it is in these situations that the colonized woman does not have much in terms of either hope or agency.

Neither Fanon's colonized woman nor his Algerian woman is ever wholly independent, but rather a slave to their sexual significance in the eyes of both colonizing and colonized men. Indeed, her sexuality becomes her defining characteristic and I wonder she is able to find her identity only through a man, how then does Fanon exclude those women who are not in a tangible relation with a man? These women may include lesbians, single but independent women, single orphaned women, nuns and sisters, and divorced women amongst others more clearly delineated by de Beauvoir. These women may see themselves are more properly defined in relation to another woman such as mothers, sisters, etc. and are intrinsically excluded from any male/female binary



discourse and regarded as having less of an actual identity and, hence, less (self?) worth. If a woman's husband is decided for her by her father or clan (*L'an V de la révolution algérienne* 100), then the only instance in which she could potentially have any sexual agency is in the choice of an extra-marital lover. Unfortunately, Fanon deprives her of this agency by severely limiting her choices. Through his vituperative depiction of an interracial relationship on the part of the colonized woman, Fanon reveals that "the black woman has to be sexually available only to the black man in order to fit into black society" (Kalisa 19) because in the instant of her success in marrying a European she will be seen as a "sur-compensateur. Elle n'était plus celle qui avait voulu être blanche, elle était blanche. Elle entrait dans le monde blanc" (overcompensator. She was no longer she who wanted to be white, she was white. She entered into the white world) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 47) and left her old one behind. In Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs*, just as the Martinican man who becomes a "demi-dieu" (15) to his people, the woman of color who marries a white man has deviated from the norm in her society. However, not only does she not fit in to her old world, she completely leaves it behind as she moves into a white one.

In Algeria, the colonized woman as wife or lover never receives agency, nor would she have political agency even after decolonization (*Les damnés de la terre* 145) because her perpetual fear reveals that she remains subordinate to her husband throughout marriage and the judgment passed on her for an interracial relationship further alienates her from society. Just as she was the object to her father's subject, even when engaging in a sexual relationship she remains the object to her new subject – her lover. Based on the theory of psychoanalysis to which Fanon devotes an entire chapter, in sex the woman

(from either the métropole or the colony) is not an active participant and rather always acted on as a subject because “sex with a woman [is] always a kind of rape generated by herself” (Chow 17). The European woman’s depravity arises from a secret desire to be raped by the black man, and her constant thought that “je me (le) ferais si j’étais à ta place” (I would do it if I were in your place) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 145) reveals the perverse desire to be raped and her instigation of the rape itself. In *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Fanon states that “qui dit viol dit nègre” (to say rape is to say black man) (134), but then follows with “c’est la femme qui se viole” (it is the woman who rapes herself) (145), wherein Fanon states that women desire their own violation at the hands of a man of color. Fanon is speaking of both white women and women of color in this instance, as long as the perpetrating male is darker, as indicated when he claims that “pour beaucoup d’Antillaises, que nous appellerons les juxta-Blanches, l’agresseur est représenté par le Sénégalais-type, ou en tout cas par un inférieur” (for many women from the Antilles, that I will call quasi-White women, the aggressor is represented by the Senegalese type, or in any case by an inferior) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 145). This quote remains pertinent for a number of reasons. First, it again elicits the imagery of a racial color continuum that debunks the racial binary. Second, Fanon is again speaking to the classification of colonized people along a social continuum in which both race and class intersect. Last, it is the only instance where Fanon mentions that men of color can also rape colonized women just as easily as the white women, and thus it is not only the colonizing men who are taking advantage of the colonized women. The colonized woman’s depravity arises from the two choices of lovers: for either the white man she can never truly have or her acquiescence to her society’s demand that she marry the black

man. While Fanon's white or colonized female allows and may secretly desire this "rape" at the hands of an inferior, whether or not the woman is raping herself the violation is still against her person, indicating that the woman is always acted upon by the male in the case of sex regardless of race. This subject/object binary reveals intersections of race and gender in which the man can always possess and act on the woman, regardless of her race. While Fanon has deconstructed the racial dichotomy, he has reinforced a gendered one on the life of the woman.

### **Levels of sociopolitical importance afforded to different types of men and their effect on the colonized woman**

Fanon's writings include a number of instances in which I can elucidate a graduated power system even among men. However, while his writings deconstruct the racial dichotomies on which colonialism stands while transposing them onto a gender binary system, he "sometimes fails to appreciate and on occasion takes for granted the particularities of graduated power relations across the continuum of skin colour" (Lane and Mahdi 171). While Fanon mentioned mulattoes in his works, he namely uses them to disprove the race binary. It is ironic that Fanon mentions the gradations of color within the colonized people's society when the métropole considered mulatto men and women as black, yet he often combines them outside of the instances that disprove binaries. Fanon often generally writes of mulatto populations as an addition to other people of color by writing of "mûlatres du commun et nègres" (mulattos and blacks) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 56) to join the two as one subject and ignoring any separation between them throughout the majority of his books. This is because rather than acknowledging them as separate from the 'purely' black men, Fanon includes mulattos in the fight for

liberation as solely on the side of the black man because he generally joins them into the same compound subject just as the Europeans did, but Fanon's choice to do so unites all people of color against the white man. This juxtaposition of all people of color against the white man seems ironic because Fanon establishes it despite trying to disprove binaries when they are focused on othering the colonized man. However, the interactions between race and class created a continuum on which men are rated in a (post)colonial world, and as women are valued in response to their relationship with a man, then this continuum affects their lives as well. A woman whose sexual partner is inferior to another is consequently less of a woman than the other woman whose partner is superior. The wife of a man of higher social standing automatically is placed as superior to the wife of a man of a lower class because of their sexual pairings, and thus the classist power relations intersect with gender in Fanon's books.

The bottom rung of this male ladder in the colonial world is the colonized black who never leaves his country. Fanon alternates between disparaging this man and sympathizing with him. He is the ultimate victim of the colonial system because he has internalized his inferiority to such an extent that he never tries to better himself through education and actually feels closer to "les 'animaux inférieurs' qu'avec l'homme blanc" (the 'inferior animals' than to the white man) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 141). Fanon's alternating treatment of this man is ironic because "the dialectic between solidarity with and alienation from the colonized population is integral to his analysis of the colonially educated black man's psychology" (Bergner 99). This lowest class of man will never deserve the European woman because he has never come close to becoming European himself. The irony of his station is that he has remained loyal to his country by

never buying into the European model, while simultaneously betraying his country by never bettering himself and disproving the archetype of a barbaric and uneducated native (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 156). Indeed, it is the next group of men who have to help mobilize and save these inferiors, for in *Les damnés de la terre* the educated colonized men are the ones who can be the authors to rewrite their history (156) and write “pour son peuple” (for his people) (170). Fanon fights to liberate his country for these men, his ‘frères’ of black skin (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 5), but deems himself to be better than they.

For Fanon, The next step above this man is the (Western) educated black, for he is “l’homme de culture colonisé” (the cultured, colonized man) (*Les damnés de la terre* 170), “le médecin” (the doctor) (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 123), or the “fonctionnaire colonial” (colonial civil servant) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 55). Fanon describes these men as the only ones worthy of marrying white women because after having lived in Europe, being educated in Europe, and learning the language they are essentially quasi-Europeans. The man who has so done in *Peau noire, masques blancs* still suffers from his inferiority and must be reaffirmed and told to acknowledge “que tu es un Français” (that you are a Frenchman) (55) and that, therefore, France is his “vrai [et] seul pays” (real [and] only country) (55), although in reality their skin still plays a major part in their lives. The men who are educated abroad have not fallen victim to colonialism, rather they have taken full advantage of the exploitative system by buying into it. They are congratulated for having escaped the lot of the barbarian, an escape facilitated by adopting the ideals of the métropole and becoming more “évolué” (evolved) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 20) than their compatriots in other countries. These

are the men that gain power in the postcolonial world, and the group to which – through his education – Fanon himself belongs. He describes his peers as “Enfants gâtés hier du colonialisme, aujourd’hui de l’autorité nationale” (children previously spoiled by colonialism, today the national authority) (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 34), in a strangely ironic and judgmental turn that insults and infantilizes the group to which he belongs. Fanon recounts in *Peau noire, masques blancs* how these men do not suffer as strongly in colonialism as those who never left, and yet suffer ever more by learning through their experiences in the métropole that despite their social climb and appearance as a “demi-dieu” (semi-deity) (15) to their people, they will never achieve the whiteness that would cause them to have actual power and agency in a colonial society (48) even if their only wish is to “être un homme parmi d’autres hommes” (be a man among others) (91).

The educated black man “se comporte... comme un vulgaire opportuniste” (behaves... like a vulgar opportunist) (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 35) after the eradication of colonialism because it is this type of man that leads the revolution, the one who will rule the postcolonial society, and the man that will create a neocolonial system in a strange mimicry of the very system he strove to destroy because he only has the “même perspective que celle du colonialisme” (same perspective as that of colonialism) (*Les damnés de la terre* 155). Fanon shows a divide between the educated black and he who represents the vast majority of colonized males in his prediction that unless we realize the lack of this solidarity between the educated and colonial black men, the postcolonial future will remain bleak because “Il n’y aura pas de culture noire parce qu’aucun homme politique ne s’imagine avoir vocation de donner naissance à des

Républiques noires. Le problème est de savoir la place que ses hommes ont l'intention de réserver à leur peuple" (There will not be a black culture because no politician sees himself as giving birth to black Republics. The problem is knowing the place that these men have the intention of granting their people) (*Les damnés de la terre* 171). This is particularly interesting considering Fanon's background, for not only was he instructed in France, not only did he practice psychiatry through the French government in Algeria, but also he joined the FLN in their anti-colonization campaigns (Cherki 102-3). Fanon's educated colonial man simply seeks to replace the European in an exploitative system in which he can control the colonized man and woman who have not "risen" as he has. Some critics believe that just as the métropole must defend the colony without necessarily respecting them, "Fanon did not identify with and even found distasteful the common people of the cultures he championed theoretically and politically" (Bergner 77). Conversely, I posit that by including this section, Fanon likely recognized this disassociation from the colonized people in his educated peers. For it seems unlikely that Fanon would choose to renege his Martinican heritage to identify as Algerian if he were to buy into this sort of system as African countries were considered to be less civilized by their colonized peers (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 20-1). Either Fanon's statement only indicated his disillusionment and mistrust in his contemporaries or, more likely, Fanon wrote to draw attention to their corruption just as he did to the colonizers so the revolutionaries could act to prevent this dire future. Hence, one can see that despite a paternalistic responsibility to protect the colonized people – male or female – Fanon had witnessed in his peers a condescending point of view that people of their own race, but of

a lower social situation, were inferior and incapable of exhibiting the agency to defend themselves.

Fanon distinguishes the “colon” from “l’Européen” despite the fact that they are both whites (*Les damnés de la terre* 30), and a point of interest is his depiction of the “colon,” that is, the white European man who lives in the colony rather than the métropole. He is “ici le prolongement de cette métropole” (here the extension of the métropole) (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 36), and represents the medium between said métropole and the colony in which he lives. Because of his unique situation, the *colon* of Fanon’s works relates much more closely to the educated black man than he does to his own people in Europe. In Fanon’s books, the European who lives in the colony retains a lower worth than his counterpart in the métropole, for he is no longer “purely” European just as the educated black man who lives in the métropole is no longer “purely” colonized. This interplay between race and location relative to power creates a fluid continuum on which to determine class in a colonial society, and allows the educated, colonized man “découvre que sa vie, sa respiration, les battements de son cœur sont les mêmes que ceux du colon” (discovers that his life, his breath, the beatings of his heart are the same as those of the colonizers” (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 32). However, this equality with a *colon* is more attainable than that with those whites who still live in France because the white living in the métropole is hierarchically superior to the white in the colony.

The white European remains the ideal in a society characterized by colonialism. When Fanon speaks of women of color in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, he states that “Le grand rêve qui les hante est celui d’être épousées par un Blanc d’Europe” (the dream that



drives them is the one in which they marry a White European) (46), and Fanon includes the mulatto women in this category because they are even more concerned with racial whitening. Mulatto women not only “veut blanchir, mas éviter de régresser” (want to be racially whitened, but avoid regressing) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 44). The white from Europe is the surest way “la mulâtresse passait du rang des esclaves à celui des maîtres” (the mulatto woman surpassed the lot of slaves to that of masters) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 47). The women in this section are those from Martinique, but their internalization of their inferiority matches that of the black men, and their subsequent obsession with the white man from Europe reveals that the white has reached the epitome of the colonial hierarchy. The black woman can never deserve the white man, and yet the black man – even when educated – knows he can never become the white man. He can be “européen” (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 55) as an adjective, but not European as a noun because he will never be white, and he is “incapable de s’intégrer, incapable de passer inaperçu... incapable de s’évader de sa race” (incapable of integrating himself, incapable of passing unnoticed... incapable of escaping his race) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 52-4) because his skin will always distinguish him from the other, true Europeans. Despite the fact that a black man may one day marry a white woman and be deserving of her “malgré [sa] couleur” (despite [his] coloring) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 94), he will not ever lose his inferiority complex in the face of the white man. Not only does this raise an interesting point of view in terms of how far the black man or woman may ascend, but it also reveals an inherent belief that the while the social scale remains with the black woman and white man on either side, the white woman and black man remain in a middle ground comprised of the intersections of

race and gender. The white woman and the man of color can be more equal because they retain a middle ground based on the interplay between sex and race. This is because while the white woman is superior in terms of race, she is inferior because of her sex, and the opposite is true of the man of color. Therefore, the woman of color is dually inferior and the white man is doubly superior, leaving them at the extremes of the social hierarchies of Fanon's books.

Conversely, the black or mulatto woman, while she may engage in illicit affairs with the colonist, is still unworthy of marrying him because she only does so to move upward socially rather than for love because "il vaut mieux être blanc" (it's better to be white) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 38), and thus her selfishness and belief that to "ce qu'il leur faut, c'est de la blancheur à tout prix" (what they need, it is whiteness at all cost) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 39). This keeps her in Fanon's low esteem. The "aspect romantique" (romantic element) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 37) of a black man with a white woman does not translate to the white man with a black woman, even if she is "une métisse" (a mulatto woman) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 37) because Fanon never allows for the women of his writings to betray the black man and love a white man without ascribing ulterior motives to her. Only "les Martiniquaises... savent... disent... répètent [que] blanchir la race, c'est sauver la race" (the Martinican women... know... say... repeat that whitening the race, it means saving the race) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 38), implying that the black or mulatto men of the country would not equate these two processes because they do not acknowledge the superiority of white men. However, Fanon creates an exception for himself, for he admits that he is both black and white because his skin is dark yet he has "la beauté et la vertu, qui n'ont jamais

été noires” (beauty and virtue, those which have never been black) (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 36). The racial continuum is not only social, it is also personal, indicating an internal struggle with the connotations of skin color that the métropole instilled in the colonies. Fanon and all other men who struggle, be they mulatto or not, are capable of having virtue eliciting sympathy because they are victims of colonialism and of their skin color, whereas women are rarely, if ever, portrayed sympathetically.

If a woman’s worth is determined by her sexual relationship to a man, and these men are themselves ranked based on a system of race, education, and class, then one can clearly see the intersection of these three systems in determining human worth. The woman is doubly judged because not only is she always rated as inferior to a man, the class of the man who owns her determines her position against other women who are similarly possessed. While Fanon’s colonized man suffers from this treatment by his own countryman, the colonized female stands to lose even more. Not only does she often remain in her country because of a system that works on all sides to subordinate her, but also her worth is determined by her relationship with the very men who perpetuate and mimic this system; even the ones who can defy this by being educated are never granted the same social level as the educated man. Indeed, the educated woman cannot marry the white man without becoming a traitor, she cannot marry the educated colonized man because he is now worthy of the European woman that society would dictate he choose over the colonized one lest the colonized woman hold him back, nor can this educated woman marry the colonized male without spurning the education she had to strive so hard to gain. These couplings are denied her, since they would ruin her in the eyes of her countrymen, or in her own eyes. Her only remaining option is to marry the colonized

man who is likely not educated, and this is the least damning in the eyes of Fanon. However, if her worth is determined by the man she marries, and if it seems her only real choice is to marry the colonized male who never left his country, then Fanon's works would seem to indicate that no matter what the colonized woman does with her life – educated or not – she will likely retain the same low worth when compared to a man, no matter his own social class.

### **Conclusion**

Fanon advocated eliminating a former system of oppression through his argumentation while simultaneously reinforcing one geared not towards race, but gender. He exemplifies this through his dehumanization through hypersexualization of the colonized woman, just as the Europeans had done to both the man of color and woman of color. However, the hypersexualization of the man of color gave him power over others, whereas the hypersexualization of the woman was a way of limiting her value to reproductive functions or as a gateway into colonial communities. Fanon created a new system of othering in which binaries focus on granting women identity and worth based on her relationship to a male counterpart. In his continuation of the binary based on gender, Fanon reiterates the female subaltern and subconsciously includes a continuum influenced by the intersecting of race, class, and gender, although he focuses on the binaries in many of his portrayals of colonized women.. Unfortunately, despite his efforts to eradicate the racial dichotomies of colonialism, he perpetuated the very same simplistic system he sought to disband.

## Conclusion

### The future of the colonized woman

#### **Patterns**

The colonized woman of Fanon's works suffers through many of the same prejudices that the colonized male does, yet each layer of her suffering is exacerbated by her gender in a system that constantly determines her worth to be less than his. Fanon creates an absence-presence dynamic that strongly favors the colonized man in his silencing and effacement of the colonized woman throughout his works. Certainly she is never truly heard nor ever actually present when her every depiction comes from the writings of a man who systematically, though potentially subconsciously, represses her in much the same way he has been by the métropole. The Civilizing Mission dehumanized the native people of the colonies by rewriting them in history so as to erase them because "Pour l'Africain en particulier, la société blanche a brisé son ancien monde" (for the African in particular, white society has broken down his old world) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 149). The métropole disseminated information in its own language so as to silence the native population in order to force them "assumer un monde, une culture... Puissance de langage!" (to assume a world, a culture... language is power!) (Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* 31). Silencing and effacement as a means of dehumanizing and delegitimizing the people of the colonies are the very tools Fanon uses in his treatment of the colonized woman in his works.

One must wonder if the woman who recognizes herself in the writings of Fanon may follow suit with his colonized man who "dans le même temps qu'il découvre son humanité, il commence à fourbir ses armes pour la faire triompher" (in the same instant

he discovers his humanity, he begins to polish his arms to triumph) (*Les damnés de la terre* 30). Women may see through their absence-presence in postcolonial writings and begin to question their representation and assert their own humanity and agency just as the colonized men did. However, Fanon states that the colonized man does not find it sufficient to become the colonizer's equal after affirming his own worth, and would rather "se battre pour être plus que le colon... de prendre sa place" (fights to be more than the colonizer... to take his place) (*Les damnés de la terre* 31-2). This equality is not realized in terms of his relation with the colonizers, and thus exists with reference to a sexual superiority over the colonized woman in Fanon's writings. One must wonder if this pattern would also apply with regards to the colonial woman's fight for equality – would this previously denied equality suffice or will she seek dominance over another subaltern in the way she suffered a dual oppression of racial colonialism and gendered patriarchy within Fanon's writings? In his words, the "colonisé est un persécuté qui rêve en permanence de devenir persécuteur" (the colonized is a persecuted person who constantly dreams to become the prosecutor) (*Les damnés de la terre* 37) in a transformation from object to subject, and Fanon manifests this in his treatment (persecution) of women in his writings. Equality is never truly achieved because the adaptation of an inferior/superior relationship to relate to gender rather than race did not allow for the colonized woman to ever achieve the same social status as her male counterparts within Fanon's books.

### **Patterns of violence**

Fanon participated heavily throughout the Algerian Revolution and (indirectly) witnessed numerous atrocities such as the Parisian massacre of Algerians just months

before his death. While *L'an V de la révolution* was written in 1959, five years into the fight, *Les damnés de la terre* was written throughout what Fanon would never know was its final year in 1961. The continuing struggle and ensuing exploitation justified more and more violent reactions by the colonized in a “more exacting and... stringent” (Cherki 157) position by Fanon. He posits that colonialism can only be destroyed through “une plus grande violence” (a greater violence) (*Les damnés de la terre* 43) than the one inherent in subjugating an entire race. He fails, however, to see the irony of repudiating one form of suppression while embarking on another through his effacement and silencing of women in his works. Rather than manifesting a sociocultural ‘violence’ against a race, he does so to a gender.

The oppression and subsequent revolution of oppressed people become complimentary forces in an uneven socio-political system because the “exploitation colonial, la misère, la famine endémique acculent de plus en plus le colonisé à la lutte ouverte et organisée” (colonial exploitation, misery, endemic famine drive the colonizer towards more and more open and organized fighting) (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 174). Fanon does not separate revolution from violence in his works; rather he calls for people to join him in the very real fight for freedom. He believes that violence is the only means through which people can fight, and thus it is the responsibility of the oppressed people to be ready and willing to fight. Fanon equates knowledge with violence because “Qu’est-ce que donc en réalité cette violence? Nous l’avons vu, c’est l’intuition de qu’ont les masses colonisées que leur libération doit se faire, et ne peut se faire, que par la force” (What truly, then, is this violence? I have seen it, it’s the realization of the colonized masses that their liberation must occur only with, and cannot occur without,

force) (*Les damnés de la terre* 51). In this case, knowledge is enlightenment: enlightenment regarding an oppressive and exploitative system that strives to create a subaltern of the colonized people, and thus forces them to fight to demand for their own agency. However, Fanon reiterates a different subaltern in the form of the colonized woman, who is oppressed by the very people who she helped liberate and who should, ideally, be her equals. Fanon posits that violence is necessary for a sociopolitical revolution to eradicate colonialism and the racial divide, but hopefully the same is not true for the one targeting sexism. Perhaps violence will also revolutionize gender, even, in such a way as to eliminate the socially constructed molds through which Fanon's new power relations occur.

### **Patterns of questioning *les valeurs***

In Fanon's words, "Dans la période de décolonisation, la masse colonisée se moque de ces mêmes valeurs, les insulte, les vomit à pleine gorge" (during the decolonizing period, the colonized mass mocks the values [of colonialism], insults them, and purges itself of them) (*Les damnés de la terre* 31), in a repudiation of the system that affirms their inferiority. Yet his own words recreate a new system of *valeurs* that posits the inferiority of the woman in her lack of agency and presence in his writing. Fanon realizes that there exists an inherent distinction between a call for change and the actual mobilization that would produce said change when he speaks of a national culture and mentions that "Toutefois il est plus facile de proclamer qu'on rejette que de rejeter réellement" (Nevertheless it is easier to claim a rejection than to actually do so) (*Les damnés de la terre* 160). Hence, while many scholars are analyzing the role of women in postcolonial work and others are working to dispel the decades of silencing and



effacement of these women, there is yet another level one must consider to determine whether any action will take place to address such oppression. One may argue that scholarly discourse is the first step towards any real change, but there are yet others who would call for the same extremism of Fanon's works in order to liberate the female because perhaps questioning society is not enough.

Fanon describes the three main parts of the subaltern's journey for equality; assimilating into the culture of the oppressor, realizing his or her inequality and attempting to reconnect with his or own people purely through a historical, literary, or remembered standpoint, and a third phase consisting of three parts in which the subaltern attempts to lose him-or-herself amongst and with the other colonized people and raising fellow subalterns to fight against the métropole (*Les damnés de la terre* 162). While in *Les damnés de la terre* Fanon focuses on the colonized people – namely the colonized man – these phases can easily be adapted to foreshadow the colonized woman's own revolution for autonomy. The second period consists of misery and emotionally takes the greatest toll on the colonized, for he or she suffers through this period “d’angoisse, de malaise, expérience de la mort, expérience aussi de la nausée” (of anguish, of uneasiness, experiencing death, and also experiencing nausea) (*Les damnés de la terre* 162), and it is this phase in which postcolonial gender discourse exists. Only during the third phase does the colonized man or woman actually interact with other colonized people and it is the true revolutionary era. The third phase creates a new narrative of liberation as it institutes a “Littérature de combat, littérature révolutionnaire, littérature nationale” (combative literature, revolutionary literature, national literature) (*Les damnés de la terre* 162) to create a new reality in which their agency is acknowledged. Fanon describes an

educated, colonized person as a “homme de culture” (man of culture) (*Les damnés de la terre* 170), and states that he who writes about the colonial past must do so within a revolutionary context because in order to give import to his writings, they must strive to work against colonialism. This is the only way to “assurer l’espoir, pour lui donner densité, il faut participer à l’action, s’engager corps et âme dans le combat national” (ensure the hope, to give it merit, one must participate in the action, engage body and soul in the national fight) (*Les damnés de la terre* 170) and give credence to writings. Therefore, if this mentality is adapted to focus on gender rather than racial equality, the current discourse is already in transition toward the third phase in terms of a social revolution aimed at liberating women within Fanon’s texts as scholars realize that the second phase is not sufficient and we must take a more active stance in finding her through her silencing, effacement and subsequent false presence.

### **The future**

For the sake of “l’Europe, pour nous-mêmes et pour l’humanité, camarades, il faut faire peau neuve, développer une pensée neuve, tenter de mettre sur pied un homme neuf” (Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must create a new skin, develop a new way of thinking, try to establish a new man) (*Les damnés de la terre* 238). In order to remove the negative consequences of colonialism, in order for humanity to have a fresh start, and in order for the colonized people to have a future, it is necessary Fanon believes that they must first learn to think of themselves not as barbarians or imposters of the white Europeans, but rather in an entirely new light that values the colonized people for who they inherently are. The reference to a new skin, untainted by the subconscious wish to emulate the white man is an allusion and metaphorical reference

to the issues raised in his first work. However, this new ideal that may rise from the eradication of colonialism is a new person, and more specifically, a new man. Because she “has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak 28), and Fanon does not often care to allow her a voice or presence in his works. The absence-presence of the colonized female in Fanon’s works cannot ever be truly rectified – for how can one finally see her history and hear her voice when looking for her through the words and writings of a man? His ability to deny her agency based on her gender arises from his effacement and silencing of her and through his mimicry of the racial power relations in creating a gendered binary. She shall not become equal or discover her own agency until she is perceived as an individual rather than as a tool or part of a group. While Fanon mentions that the European will never think of the colonized woman alone – rather he will always “rêve toujours d’un groupe de femmes, d’un champ de femmes, qui n’est pas sans évoquer le gynécée, le harem, thèmes exotiques fortement implantés dans l’inconscient” (always dreams of a group of women, a field of women, that do not exist without evoking the female dwelling, the harem, exotic themes strongly implanted in the subconscious) (*L’an V de la révolution algérienne* 28). The sexualization of the woman within a harem again reinforces that by physically conquering one colonized woman, both the colonizer and the colonized man are able to control multiple people, and therefore their lust cannot be satisfied by one female subaltern. Alternatively, the colonizer will see her as but one in a set of many tools with which he can demoralize and conquer the entire colony – and Fanon, himself, rarely depicts the woman as an individual. Even in these occasional instances in which he does, the colonized woman generally remains an stereotype that reinforces her

inferiority to the colonized male for she can never escape one of four roles in his works; that of a tool, that of a traitor, that of a resistor or and witness to colonialism's atrocities, or that of an unparticipating member of decolonization and therefore complacent member of colonialism. I say there are four roles, but the first two can potentially be combined into one: the female other of a male, be he European or colonized.

Fanon's statement that "Seul l'engagement massif des hommes et des femmes dans des tâches éclairées et fécondes donne contenu et densité à cette conscience" (only massive participation of men and women in the clear and fruitful task grants merit and importance to this conscience) (*Les damnés de la terre* 147) remains pertinent for two reasons: first, because it calls again for a unified will of the colonized against their oppressors, and second because it explicitly calls for the colonized woman to play a part in this struggle. Not only is this one of the rare instances in which Fanon specifically writes about "femmes," causing one to wonder if his lack of use of the term through the majority of *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*, and *Les damnés de la terre* is an intentional effacement of her in his narrative, but it also reveals the necessity of having both men and women work towards a postcolonial world. Fanon fails to acknowledge the intersection of race, class and gender, focusing solely on the former two throughout his works. Race is what binds people together in his works, rather than nationalism, gender, or even a shared humanity. He states that "la littérature colonisée des vingt dernières années n'est pas une littérature nationale mais une littérature des nègres" (the colonized literature of the past twenty years is not a national literature but a black one) (*Les damnés de la terre* 155) in which race is the main ingredient of the revolution. The colonized unify in light of the superficial categorization

of the métropole and its colonialist consequences, without the substance necessary to truly form a camaraderie that would ensure equality in a postcolonial world. Race was socially constructed by colonialism, and therefore the real ties that could bind the revolutionaries (such as nationalism and patriotism) do not ensure equality of everyone after decolonization. Indeed, the female subaltern arises at the mercy of the patriarchal, colonized man: and she is the colonized woman.

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