

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The View Beyond Looking: Isaac Julien's *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask*

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This paper is a simulation of a court hearing in which Frantz Fanon is accused of different things by different authors while I attempt to present a case for the defence of Fanon, indicating that a careful reading of his work will show that he has no case to answer. The paper arose from a plenary talk that I presented at a conference on immigrants in Europe which included the premier of the film on Fanon directed by Isaac Julien. The paper has been updated to reflect some current debates since the original presentation.

Keywords: Fanon; Julien; Olsson; Violence; Black; Skin; White; Mask

Introduction

Frantz Fanon died in 1961 at the age of thirty-six. Thirty-six years after his death, I was thirty-six years old in 1997 when I had the honour and privilege of being invited to introduce the Italian premier of *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Mask* (Julien, 1996; Gordon, 1996).¹ This is a fuller text of my presentation before an audience that was made up of mainly participants in an international conference.

Who Is Fanon?

Fanon was born in Martinique in 1925 where he received a typical French colonial education. As a young man, he enlisted in the Free French Army to fight against fascism and won a decoration for bravery. Incidentally, the officer who decorated him was to become the commander of the French Army of occupation in Algeria against whom Fanon was later to fight when he joined the nationalists. Before going to Algeria, Fanon studied psychiatry in France and wrote an essay that he intended to submit as a dissertation. He called it *An Essay for the Disalienation of Blacks*. This was later republished as *Black Skin White Masks* (Fanon, 1967). Fanon's writing, both analytically rigorous and poetic, uses poetry, fiction and biographies to critique the often baseless claims made by some serious scholars about the psychology of the colonised. *Black Skin White Masks* is so well written that some student essays on the World Wide Web refer to it as a novel!

Between that long essay and his death on 6 December 1961, Fanon wrote a series of essays that have been collected in two volumes; *Towards the African Revolution* (Fanon, 1970) and *A Dying Colonialism* (Fanon, 1965). While dying of leukaemia, he completed his best known work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1961). Knowledge of Fanon's complete oeuvre is necessary before viewing a film that is sub-titled with Fanon's first book only.

The Filmic Essay Genre In Cinema

In *Looking for Langston*, Isaac Julien experimented with the essay style of film making that he was later to apply to Fanon. These two films differ technically from his feature film, *Young Soul Rebels*, especially because of the use of carefully choreographed dramatisation, textual voice-overs and voice-offs from the works of his subjects, documentary style interviews with living experts and knowledgeable lay people and the use of archival film footage. In *Fanon*, this essay style is so successful that one reviewer said that it is more of a 'DPhilm' than a film.² What is without doubt is the fact that this is probably the first time a made-for-television docudrama has gone on general release at the same time as

¹ *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Mask*, directed by Isaac Julien, Produced by Mark Nash for the Arts Council of England, 52 Minutes, 1996, UK, in English and French with English subtitles. Perhaps the version on general release is not the complete film for Lewis Gordon, 1996, 'Black Skins Masked: Finding Fanon in Isaac Julien's Frantz Fanon...', in *Difference*, Volume 8, No.3, reports seeing a seventy-minutes version of the film in New York.

² Matthew Sweet, *Independent on Sunday*, 29 June, 1997.

being used internationally in university teaching. In Fanon, Julien used footage from Gillo Pontecorvo's 1965 classic, *The Battle of Algiers*, which was rereleased to coincide with the general release of Julien's *Fanon*.

Why Fanon And Why Now?

One of the experts featured in the film was the founding father of cultural studies, Stuart Hall, who explained the importance of the work of Fanon for post-colonial studies and studies of slavery and liberation. Another expert featured was the cultural theorist, Homi Bhabha who read extracts from Fanon's work and who is seen searching and researching (for the ghosts of Fanon?) as he wandered through crowded market scenes. In his book, *The Location of Culture*, he tells us why Fanon is relevant now:

'Remembering Fanon is a process of intense discovery and disorientation. Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present. It is such a memory of the history of race and racism, colonialism and the question of cultural identity, that Fanon reveals with greater profundity and poetry than any other writer' (Bhabha, 1994).

Fanon made this act of painful re-membering explicit by stating that the experience of racism by him was like an amputation or a haemorrhage. When he complained that all he wanted was to be a man among men, he was told that he was welcome because he was educated, that the inferiority of the Negro had nothing to do with skin colour and everything to do with intelligence: 'But of course, come in, Sir, there is no color prejudice among us ... Quite, the Negro is a man like ourselves It is not because he is black that he is less intelligent than we are'. Perhaps such lines should have been said by the European rather than repeated by the Fanon character to be more consistent with the docu-drama format.

Given the above observation of the apparent colour-blindness of racism, it is strange that Fanon is identified so strongly with the gaze, the look, the visual aspects of oppressive power whilst he was more concerned with the impacts of oppression. 'Dirty Nigger! Or simply, Look, a Negro' are the opening words of Fanon's essay on 'The Fact of Blackness' in *Black Skin White Masks*. This has led many Fanonists into concentrating on the sexualised gaze of desire and disgust towards the colonised. Yet 'Dirty Nigger' is not a visual expression but a verbal one that might bear little or no visual resemblance to the subject or his/her personal hygiene. Similarly, when Fanon quotes a child shouting to her mother, 'Look, a Negro!' he is trying to say that the mother had ignored, overlooked or refused to acknowledge the presence of the Negro. Perhaps, if the mother had kept this folk devil that she was probably fond of scaring the child with under surveillance, the child would not have been so frightened. Even when the mother tried to reassure the child by making an exception for Fanon, 'This Negro is a handsome man', Fanon retorted, 'This handsome Negro says bugger you!'³ No matter how insulting a child's cry or gaze was to Fanon, it was not the key form of oppression that he was concerned about.

Black Skin White Masks repeatedly emphasised the role of language in the practice of and resistance to oppression. Fanon further emphasised this importance of language by dramatically analysing the role that Radio Alger played as a propaganda organ for France even at a time that radio sets were scarce among the natives and how the nationalists fought back with 'This is the voice of Algeria', a voice that the French jammed again and again but never managed to suppress (Fanon, 1970). Visual appearance does not have a similar significance to Fanon except when the appearance (of a veiled woman) conceals something that the viewer is unable to see because it is hidden beneath stereotypes. Bhabha was spot on when he interpreted the scene described by Fanon as illustrating that 'looking/hearing/reading as sites of subjectification in colonial discourse are evidence of the importance of the visual and auditory imaginary for the histories of societies' (Bhabha, 1994: 76).

This idea that we need to go beyond the gaze and the look is very important here because we are talking about a film and the look or the gaze is very central to film theory. Film experts say that a film is made up of two kinds of signs, iconic signs (for the eyes) and lexical signs (for the ears). However, due to the historical development of cinema from camera technology, the lexical signs were 'notoriously passed over in favour of the image' (Silverman, 1989: 42) in film theory and so the iconic signs dominated and continue to dominate film practice and discourse. For example, if someone asks us why we are gathered here in Cinema Lumiere at this time of the night, the ready answer will be that we came here to watch a movie. That is what the early motion pictures were, things to watch because they were silent movies (accompanied by live music, but that is not the point).

³ I have seen many different translations of this passage: 'The handsome nigger retorts: 'bugger you, madame,' (in Macey, 2012: 165); 'The handsome Negro says', 'fuck you', madame' (in the 1967 Grove Press, New York, translation by Richard Philcox); 'Kiss the handsome Negro's ass, madame!' (In the 1986 edition by Pluto Press, London, translated by Charles Lam Markmann with an introduction by Ziauddin Sardar and Homi Bhabha). Or in French online translations: 'Le nègre élégant dit le con vous, la madame.' or 'Le nègre élégant dit, Vous glisser,' la madame. 'Embrassez l'âne du Nègre élégant, la madame!') and so I wondered what the original French by Fanon said. A French Professor, Dr. Norma George, supplied the original to me as follows: 'I found the passage – the meaning is quite clear, but somewhat hard to translate exactly. The context might help somewhat. Fanon explains how a child reacts in fear to his presence as a black person. To reassure him, the mother says: See, this negro is handsome! He replies: The handsome negro damns you, madame. (Le beau nègre vous emmerde, madame). This is the most direct translation I can come up with, except that 'damn' is probably not as strong as 'emmerde' in this particular case, leaving your second (third?) translation as probably the closest in terms of conveying the tone and sentiment of the remark. Tricky business, translation. By the way, the French version of the title is 'L'expérience vécue du noir' or 'The Fact of Blackness'.

There are different ways of viewing a movie, according to film theorists (Mulvey, 1989; Nixon, 1997; and hooks, 1992). One way is the voyeuristic look that is sadistic, colonising and punitive in its aim of putting the subject under surveillance for the purpose of achieving or consolidating control. If that is our style then we will be looking for flaws in the cinematography of Julien so that we can tear him to pieces (for example, why did he drop the plural sign 's' from *Masks*, an error which suggests a uniformity among black people that Fanon and even Julien tried to avoid? Or if his filmic essay style works as both a bio-pic as well as a properly footnoted thesis on Fanon, we could be attentive to see where Fanon got things wrong so that we can justify our refusal to read his work and take him seriously.

The second type of looking is the fetishistic look which is celebratory, consumerist and romanticist. If we adopt the fetishistic look tonight, we could be looking for ways of enjoying the sexual scenes that Julien threw in from his gay politics but if we are not into that kind of stuff (not the same as being homophobic), then we might be looking at Fanon for justifications of our sexual preferences especially if we are involved in a multiracial relationship or we might simply be hoping to 'enjoy' the film without critically engaging with the issues it raises.

In other words, if you do not like the film, do not use it as an excuse not to read Fanon and if you like the film, that is an even better reason to read and re-read his work. Julien reconstructed Fanon from his essays, books, documents and commentaries by experts and members of his family. By so doing, Julien throws some light on Fanon's philosophy of sexual politics in a violent society. By focusing narrowly on sexuality and psychiatry, Julien was following the academic practice of narrowing down a topic for an essay. By using drama documentary styles of presentation, he was following the style of television documentaries about 'real people'. Both as an essay and as a hagiography, we can enjoy the work of Julien for different reasons. However, this option of plain enjoyment is rarely available to black viewers, according to bell hooks, because of the racist, sexist and imperialist ways that black people have been conventionally represented or excluded from films or the history of the punishment of black people for looking at the other (hooks, 1992). Of course, both styles of looking are often combined by the same viewers hence the two styles of looking are often attributed to men as if women always avert their gaze or as if they are always the object rather than the viewer, ignoring male sex objects.

Perhaps Fanon would prefer a democratic view that is neither voyeuristic nor fetishistic. A democratic look or view is the type of looking that we are gathered here to attempt tonight. It is rare to schedule a film as a plenary session in an international conference with an introductory speaker and a subsequent debate (Lewis Gordon reports that it was shown at a star-studded conference in the New York Law School but without an integral conference debate such as the one in Bologna). Few people would like you to tell them all about a film before viewing it (a spoiler) and so this introductory presentation focuses on background theoretical issues that could help us focus the debates afterwards. Given the pedagogical setting for tonight's show (only for the eyes again), we have no choice but to attempt a democratic viewing which simply means going beyond the look to form a point of view. We can go beyond the look by also listening to this introduction, and to the debates within the film itself, and to one another during the debates that will surely continue beyond this venue. This democratic viewing is what Stuart Hall (1997) indirectly suggests in his essay, 'The Spectacle of the Other' in his editorial, *Representation*.

Hall says that whenever we are confronted with a cultural representation, let us face it, we need to go beyond looking to raise questions that would enable us to penetrate the surface of the appearance. One way to do this is to follow Roland Barthes (1977) and ask, what is the myth or underlying message of the representation? When John Steinbeck, for example, reported a truck driver in the second chapter of *Grapes of Wrath* as saying,

'I remember a piece of poetry this here guy wrote down This guy had words in it that Jesus H. Christ wouldn't know what they meant 'An' there we spied a nigger, with a trigger that was bigger than an elephant's proboscis or the wanger of a whale' (Steinbeck, 1939).

Was he not saying something similar to that of Michael Cournot who asserted that 'four negroes with their penises exposed would fill a Cathedral' (with babies or wedding guests)? The fragment of poetry quoted by the truck driver stuck to the mind of Joad throughout *The Grapes of Wrath* as if he was trying to figure out the meaning for Christ's sake but Fanon had no doubt that such sentiments help to sustain the amputation of the Negro: 'One is no longer aware of the Negro but only of a penis: the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis' (Fanon, 1967: 170).

Here, Fanon is once again de-emphasising the importance of the look especially when it leads to a view that is distorted, the gaze that obscures as in the gaze of the shopkeeper in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (Morrison, 1979) or the claim by Ralph Ellison (1976: 3) in his *Invisible Man* that 'I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me'. Why emphasise the look when what they see is only a fraction of you amplified by their fear and by their desire? Fanon's 'Look a Negro' has more to do with invisibility than with the gaze and so it is misleading to argue that in his work, 'the colonial scene is reconstructed as a violence of viewing and the coloniser's power (is) linked to the terror of his gaze' (Döring, 1997). On the contrary, Goldberg and many others have pointed out that Fanon realised the uses of both visibility and invisibility for the colonised who go out of their ways to avoid the gaze of the coloniser, not because the coloniser has an evil eye but because the colonised has to conduct acts of liberation by going underground and at the same time making sure that the message of liberation is heard by both the coloniser and the colonised (Goldberg, 1996).

The myth of the film, *Fanon*, seems to be that difference is fascinating and Fanon is fascinating because he is a theorist of difference. However, Lewis Gordon is very critical of Julien for not featuring authors who have published substantial works on Fanon and for focusing only on sexual difference whereas Fanon was a theorist who concentrated on socio-political difference. This is a criticism that has been applied to most commentators on Fanon as Sekyi-Otu (1996) demonstrates. What is it that makes difference fascinating? Stuart Hall (1997) outlines five different answers to the question, why is difference fascinating?

After reviewing four conventional answers to why difference is fascinating, Stuart Hall argues from a position in cultural studies that the understanding of representations and difference must be linked to power. In other words, difference is fascinating because, as Bakhtin and Fanon emphasised, power is exercised through representation and the mapping of difference. This view is supported by Edward Said (1978) who argues that European culture was responsible for the creation of orientalism as a field of study and as a field of colonisation. This is a good example of what Foucault (1980) called the knowledge-power axis but unfortunately, Foucault focused only on what he called the micro physics of power by and over individuals while conveniently ignoring the macro physics of imperialist power relations, even while he lived in and wrote from a former colonial governor's residence in Tunisia (Agozino, 2003).

According to Stuart Hall, when we adopt this answer to the question of the importance of difference, we will have to acknowledge that meaning can never be finally fixed in societies structured in dominance. Hence, whenever we come across any cultural representation, we should ask two types of question: (1) What is the poetics or the presentation of the representation? Is the presentation very effective and why? Answers will be in the form of a critique of the style of presentation and in the case of the film that we are discussing, we will want to know if the film-makers have done a good job. (2) What is the politics or how is the film invested with power? Can a dominant regime of representation be challenged, overthrown or changed? Hall suggests that the answer to this last question is affirmative and he goes on to suggest ways of contesting representations:

1. Some people would simply reverse the stereotypes without subverting them as in Badass films that tried to liberate black characters from blaxploitation films by giving them the role of the heroic gangsters who got away with everything. Fanon did not follow this strategy in his writing because he did not lionise the black man and demonise the white man but pointed out the neurotic consequences of oppressive power between them. However, Julien tried to reverse stereotypes in the film by lining up characters who suggested that Fanon got it wrong because the black woman in Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* did not reflect how black women saw themselves. Or that Fanon disrespected the black woman who was married to a white man while romanticising the black man as the object of the sexual fantasies of white women (Fanon married one himself) and gay white men. Or that Fanon was an outsider who could never really understand Algeria and so there is nothing in his theory that could help us understand the madness in present day Algeria. Or that when Fanon said that he had never seen evidence of homosexuality among the men of Antilles, Julien suggests that he was probably lying because his character played by Colin Salmon, said, 'I had no opportunity to establish the overt presence of homosexuality in Martinique' immediately after watching a dramatisation of gay love in the film.
2. The second type of contest is the substitution of 'positive' for 'negative' representations as in Bennetton adverts but Hall points out that such a strategy retains the principle of evil. Baudrillard (1990) argues that the reality principle has given way to the principle of evil in public discourse because the contest is not over who is right and who is wrong anymore but over who is good and who is evil. The principle of evil is dominant because it is infinitely reversible while the principle of reality has nothing as its opposite, something is either real or not real but it could be good or bad depending on how you look at it. Fanon would say that the colonised has no luxurious choice between reality and evil because both principles are relevant to understanding an oppressive system that is real enough and diabolical beyond imagination. It could be said that by associating the colonial authorities with greater violence, both Fanon and the film by Julien have substituted the hegemonic image of the coloniser as a good peace-keeper for a more realistic one of the baddy. On the contrary, in *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon analysed the Algerian European Minority, including Algerian Jews, and demonstrated that some of them risked their lives supporting the Algerian war of independence due to their liberal belief in Liberty, Fraternity and Equality.
3. The third strategy which is favoured by Hall, Fanon and Julien is that of contesting meanings from within. This strategy is concerned with the forms that racial representations take and not with a new content. For example, Fanon did not start with the question that most empiricist social scientists are still trying to answer, whether racism exists or not. Fanon's interest lies in the demystification of racism by making elaborate critiques of the racialized look, control and exclusion strategies. According to Hall, the aim of this strategy is to make 'looking' seem strange by de-familiarising it and thereby making explicit what is often hidden from and in the look. This third strategy is what I called the democratic view that goes beyond looking to underscore perspectivity.

However, Patricia Williams has argued that no look is ever neutral and so the democratic view is not necessarily a neutral one (Williams, 1990). She recalled going for a guided walk in New York with a group of university students and found herself complaining when the guide promised a possible 'show' in a black church that had special services at Easter.

Some of the students said that they were just going to look (rather than to hear the sermon), that no one would mind. Commenting on this incident, bell hooks argues that if a group of black students went into a synagogue or a mosque, like zoo visitors, just to look, it could be construed as disrespectful to solemn ceremonies (hooks, 1992). She agrees with Williams that there is no such thing as a neutral look and so she openly calls for the oppositional gaze. I have argued above that we need to go beyond the gaze itself (especially when we are talking about a movie because we need to listen as well in order to form democratic points-of-view. Of course, a democratic viewpoint would be tolerant of the oppositional gaze but the latter seems to rule out any chances of itself ever becoming hegemonic and also prioritises the visual uncritically. The democratic look or view calls for a dialogue and a transcendence.

Following this strategy, I will invite you to go beyond watching *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Mask* and also try to hear the film especially because some of the contents of the film are readings from the texts of Fanon as voiced off/over by Homi Bhabha. Kaja Silverman has warned that we should not regard the voice or sound as being natural on cinema compared to vision which is usually differentiated by the distance between the representation and its referent. According to Silverman, the different uses of the woman's voice or sound in Hollywood produce the same kind of oppressive objectification that results from the image or gaze (Silverman, 1989). However, when I invite you to hear the film as well as watch it, I mean that you should approach it with the critical mind of a jury at a juridical hearing. Since the film-makers were so critical of Fanon by their choice of interviewees that one reviewer wondered if they were honouring the man or trying to demolish him, let us assume that in this virtual trial they are the prosecutors (Mars-Jones, 1997). I will try to play the role of the counsel for the defence of Fanon even though I will be trying to prove that Fanon needs no defence actually. The audience should pretend to be the jury. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, allow me to present to you the only exhibit in this trial, welcome to the Italian Premier of Isaac Julien's *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Mask*....

The Debate and Discussion

The film ran its course and I returned to the high table to chair a debate. It was already half past eleven at night and people were probably tired after a long day at the conference. Only one question was raised by an Italian man in the audience: why did Fanon privilege violence in his theory of liberation instead of borrowing a leaf from Gandhi who achieved much more through non-violence? I threw this question open to the audience for discussion but when no one answered, I had to speak from the point of view of Fanon's defence attorney.

First of all, it should be clear that Fanon's message was not only for the Negro. As Fanon put it, 'The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation' (Fanon, 1967). In a reference to this aspect of Fanon's thought, Walter Rodney recognises that Fanon has:

'scorchingly and at length (dealt) with the question of the minority in Africa which serves as the transmission line between the metropolitan capitalists and the dependencies in Africa. The importance of this group cannot be underestimated. The presence of a group of African sell-outs is part of the definition of underdevelopment. Any diagnoses of underdevelopment in Africa will reveal not just low per capita income and protein deficiencies, but also the gentlemen who dance in Abidjan, Accra, and Kinshasa when music is played in Paris, London, and New York' (Rodney, 1982: 26).

Secondly, it is wrong to see Fanon as the prophet of violence although Wallerstein argues that Fanon was probably prescribing as well as describing or analyzing violence whereas I see Fanon as a psychiatrist analysing violence rather than as a provocateur (Wallerstein, 2009). One reviewer of the film suggests that Fanon had been reduced from an icon of revolution like Che Guevara to the status of a mere colonial psychiatrist who wrote about sexual jealousies and the gaze that expresses them (Stanton, 1997). A version of this question was raised earlier by Lewis Gordon who wondered why the film-makers focused on sexuality instead of representing the politics of imperialism that Fanon made the core of his work and why they chose to represent a stereotypical image of black male sexuality rather than the alternatives that Fanon's biography exemplify? It is important to note the historical specificity of Fanon's analysis. He had just emerged from a war against fascism, victorious and confident that arguments alone, poetry of negritude alone, historical reconstructions of the heritage of the Other alone and sexuality alone would not have been adequate for the defeat of a fascist enemy who was bent on subduing its opponents by genocidal violence. In his 2014 documentary based on the first and the last chapters of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Göran Olsson used colonial archives in Sweden to prove that Fanon was writing against colonial violence that affected the colonized physically and psychologically (Olsson, 2014; Kullberg, 2015).

What Fanon was saying in Algeria is that the uprising of the natives is not surprising because when you oppress any people violently, you should not be surprised when (not if) they turn round to resist violently. In other words, the analytical description offered by Fanon is not always a prescription as well. Fanon did not say why Africans must revolt against colonialism but he tried to explain why Africans revolted. Fanon then went beyond this observation to suggest that if the relatively powerless underdogs hunt in packs in an organised manner rather than spontaneously, they are more likely to succeed in overthrowing the oppressive top dogs. This is similar to the view of Alvin Gouldner (1970) that sociologists often write about the underdog on its back and completely ignore the underdog fighting back because they do not want to fall out of favour with those who fund their research.

It is not a question of choosing between Gandhi and Fanon because Fanon combined a lot of non-violent work with his militant opposition to oppressive power. Let us not forget that after fighting the Nazis, he wrote essays about oppression and he wrote them so beautifully that we even enjoy reading them. Then he became a colonial psychiatrist, treating the victims of torture on both sides of the conflict. Even when he resigned his impossible job and openly joined the Algerian fighters, his role was still that of the strategist, ambassador, propagandist and theorist, not that of the terrorist. Fanon adopted peaceful means of struggle whenever possible and adopted violent means when the enemy, such as the Nazis occupying France or the French occupying Algeria, genocidally refused to listen to reason and conscience. But even then, Fanon saw himself and many others as proof that being different does not mean that you would automatically support imperialist aggression just as being the Other does not make you essentially an anti-colonialist. That was why he went to defend the French peasants against fascism even though many of the peasants themselves did not seem to give a damn about the war. In this sense, Fanon has a lot in common with Gandhi (who claims that he learned non-violence from the Zulus) and Mandela in spite of their differences of approach as Presbey argues (1996).

We left it there hoping to continue the discussion elsewhere. As we sat having a drink afterwards, an Italian woman asked me why Fanon got himself a white wife while suggesting that black women who marry white men must be dummies because those men would never really love them. I answered that Fanon was not talking about every black woman. He was talking about a certain black woman, Mayotte Capecia, 'the woman of color', whose name he even mentioned. He was analysing the autobiographical accounts of this black woman who married a white man to fulfil a dream that turned into a nightmare. Fanon was not looking for final answers. Rather, he indicated that he hoped that some black people will not recognise themselves in *Black Skin White Masks* and hoped that those who recognise themselves would move towards disalienation from internalised racism. Sharpley-Whiting concludes similarly that attempts to shame Fanon as a liberation theorist whose views are irrelevant to the struggles of black women miss what could be called Fanonist feminism (Sharpley-Whiting, 1996).

This explains why the black woman in the film said that she read the book as a young student in France but did not recognise herself in the image of 'the black woman' in it. This also suggests that when Fanon writes about the black man (a great bit autobiographically) or the white man, or the white woman, he is often referring to specific characters that he knew in his personal life or in his professional capacity as a psychiatrist or to people he read about. That is why he is fond of the definite article, 'the'. Similarly, when he claimed that he had never seen evidence of homosexuality in the Antilles, he was not lying but simply saying just that. Even in these days of mass mediated culture, how many heterosexual people have personally witnessed homosexuality apart from representations in the media? Let us quote this footnote from *Black Skin White Masks* that Fanon addressed to a heterosexual white psychiatrist who tried to 'abominate' black men by saying that he found them to be so sensual:

Let me observe at once that I had no opportunity to establish the overt presence of homosexuality in Martinique. This must be viewed as the result of the absence of the Oedipus complex in the Antilles. The schema of homosexuality is well enough known. We should not overlook, however, the existence of what are called there 'men dressed like women' or 'godmothers'. Generally they wear shirts and skirts. But I am convinced that they lead normal sex lives. They can take a punch like any 'he-man' and they are not impervious to the allures of women - fish and vegetable merchants. In Europe, on the other hand, I have known several Martinicans who become homosexuals, always passive. But this was by no means a neurotic homosexuality: For them it was a means to a livelihood, as pimping is for others (Fanon, 1967: 180, note 44).

On this note, I would like to rest my case and hope that the jury will go out and return with a verdict acquitting my client of all charges against him since he has no case to answer, as Lewis Gordon has also concluded (Gordon, 1996).

But before I end my submission, let me call a final witness for the defence, the mighty Malcolm X (Malcolm X, 1965). One of the most important lessons that this messenger brought to us is that we must be humble enough to know that even our heroes are not flawless. When he learnt that his spiritual leader was seeing some of the women in his congregation, Malcolm nearly lost his faith. Instead of quitting, he sat down to study the scriptures. In the end, he concluded convincingly, that all the saints and all the prophets and all the heroes in the scriptures had their blemishes or weaknesses. However, unlike Mark Antony who claimed that the good is often buried with the bones of heroes, we remember these great historical figures, according to Malcolm, not because of the things they got wrong but for the things they got right. One thing that Fanon got wrong was that he agreed to work as a prison psychiatrist for a brutal colonial regime but he realized his mistake and quickly resigned and joined the liberation forces.

Stuart Hall is right when he pointed out in the film that Fanon has no answers to the nightmare unfolding in Algeria today and Fanon's son suggested in the film that although his father would be saddened by the turn of events, no one has the right to expect Fanon to have answers for present-day Algeria. However, a reading of Fanon's essay on the 'Pitfalls of National Consciousness' already prophesied such mass neurosis by suggesting that an over-emphasis on cultural nationalism could result in an endless fratricidal search for cultural enemies even after the settlers had been defeated and forced to withdraw. Olufemi Taiwo discovered through his postgraduate students in Nigeria that Fanon could be said to be a prophet of the post-colonial history of Nigeria (Taiwo, 1996). Fanon does not have all the answers, but who does?

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