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VOLUME II

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Fanon, Memmi, Glissant and postcolonial writing

ANJALI PRABHU

Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi and Édouard Glissant are three creative thinkers who share something of a common *Weltanschauung*. Without taking the more extreme definition from Freud that the latter is the unified solution as generated from a particular perspective of all the problems of the universe, certainly the centrality of the colonial encounter with otherness forms the overt structuring factor for the worldview of each of these formidable intellectuals. However, their creative paths would take different form. The themes that stage the encounter and the timbre of the voice of otherness in the texts of these intellectuals prove to be quite different in each case. In this chapter I will consider the oeuvre of these thinkers as together forming an aesthetic corpus that anticipates the transnational aspirations of a range of postcolonial francophone writers of encounter.

A defining moment: literary history and the theme of encounter

In considering this material historically I am reminded of Walter Benjamin's idea that:

Thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a constellation saturated with tensions, it gives that constellation a shock, by which thinking crystallizes into a monad. . . In this structure [the historicist materialist] recognizes the sign of a messianic arrest of happening, or (to put it differently) a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history.¹

This moment of arrest has been translated diversely but it is the *Jetztzeit* – or literally the time of now or the now-time – which becomes a time of recognition of the unfulfilled potentialities of the past. For Benjamin, it is not simply

that the past illuminates the present or vice-versa. Rather, a particular image brings together the moment of the past with the time of the present in the form of a constellation, which implies, primarily, a form of relation by which these entities are held together and produce a particular coherence. To envisage these writers as occupying a generative space for a vast array of texts presents a way to seize a moment, so to speak, in literary history, and blast open the space of national literatures while creating a new constellation or set of relations. It is also to undo a strictly chronological understanding of a section of postcolonial literature. However, it is important to note that such an act of framing is not purely idealistic, nor arbitrary. It is aided, even suggested, by various historical/biographical realities related to the 'moment' of these three writers who belong to approximately the same generation – all of them being born in the 1920s.

Another important aspect that this framing is able to capture is the fundamental importance of these thinkers to decolonizing processes and the reciprocal importance of that moment to the thought of these and other *évolués*. Each of these men, all of whom were born into the period of dissent, provides unique experiential and intellectual ways of battling with colonial realities and combating their dominating force. In each of them one finds a transformation of the aesthetic experience of writing/reading into an ethical experience of solidarity. In this sense, the different intellectual and experiential unfolding of the moment represents not just different possibilities of reaction, in each case, but more importantly, different *Weltanschauungen* that constellate that same colonial moment differentially.

In considering Memmi alongside Glissant and Fanon in literary history, the most obvious de-linking that occurs is of an area-specific order. Normally, in overviews or anthologies, one would find Fanon and Glissant under 'Caribbean' and Memmi either under 'North Africa' or, in nation-specific organization, under 'Tunisia'. In Patrick Corcoran's informative introduction to francophone literature, for example, we find Memmi and Fanon/Glissant under Maghreb and Caribbean, respectively.² Clearly, there is reason to use area-specific organization to understand chronological differences in the political history of specific regions and to be able to situate intellectuals within that history. But in truly accounting historically for the way literary writing emerged in postcolonial 'voice' the more wide-angle-look allows accounting of personal and theoretical interconnections amongst these intellectuals. It also provides a more accurate sense of common language usage and deployment of categories and concepts that came to be available to, and invented by, the francophone writers who created them.

Poetics of encounter

The contours of the moment I propose are delineated by realities, such as Glissant's long and prolific career, Fanon's explosively short one, and Memmi's unmistakable, though arguably not completely unexpected, shift in ideological position. We need look no further than Glissant himself to find brilliant insight on the very subject of the scope of an historical moment: having had to place himself in contradistinction to his compatriot, Aimé Césaire, Glissant's general position is that one can no longer employ such a poetics of the moment; rather, what is called for is a poetics of duration, as we will see. It is evident these 'moments' or 'periods' are utterly constructed in human thought in order to access a particularly shaped totality, which is, itself, a transposition of reality in the human understanding.

When literature is categorized following colonial political and geographical divisions it becomes more difficult to account for symbolic and political strategies of solidarity that resisted them and eventually ended official colonialism. Grouping these intellectuals transnationally and placing such a conception within a more general postcolonial rather than restrictive francophone frame, as is possible within the vision of this collection, in itself 'postcolonializes', to borrow Ato Quayson's term, the very moment that these writers are purported to constitute here, by rendering visible the reframing action that their work differentially accomplishes on the common *Weltanschauung* we have mentioned.³ With Fanon, we might characterize this moment as the third phase of the intellectual's development – after assimilation and remembering his past – when the native intellectual '[a]fter having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people'.⁴ In terms of literary history, if assimilation and a return to precolonial indigenous richness in form and theme are no longer options because of the deep disillusionment that arose from those projects in reality, our three writers assume the task of shaking up their present while providing a template for doing so in aesthetic terms.

Colonial inequality appears exacerbated when viewed within the notion of encounter, because this is a moment in which the historical self of the colonized is interpellated, or called upon to be, 'against' another with a divergent history. The crisis of narration stems from the erasure of indigenous history, lack of a legitimate subject of such a history, and impossibility of collective memory and thus collective consciousness for the colonized. The coming together of these and other elements within the colonial situation will necessitate mythmaking: Aimé Césaire early on recognized, for example, the

centrality of the image of Toussaint L'Ouverture for the Caribbean, and indeed, all colonized peoples.⁵ The advent of literary writing from the postcolonial context in recognizable but thoroughly transformed Western form is thus built upon a historical aesthetic that we might identify in terms of the encounter, but it is, simultaneously, in every sentence directed at undoing the terms of the encounter itself. We find in the Caribbean the most forceful and visibly enduring cultural forms resulting from historical rupture, erasure of memory, and obstacles to collective consciousness because of the lack of what Glissant has called *arrière-pays* or cultural hinterland.⁶ The strong imprint on French writing by colonized persons writing in the Caribbean voice came at a formative moment in the language of postcolonial French and was characterized by a *Weltanschauung* that distinguished it from hexagonal or metropolitan French as much as it marked the latter.

Benjamin's idea is that studying the past should not be in order to recognize that past 'as it really was', but to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up 'in a moment of danger' because it 'threatens both the content of the tradition and those who inherit it'.⁷ In situating a moment shared (but also exploded, and expanded in the senses described above) thematically and historically by these three thinkers, we might study the past to privilege such moments of danger. In doing so, it is first impossible to see francophone texts as merely French or African or Caribbean. Instead, the notion of encounter continues to aesthetically defy their recuperation into the French canon despite the many recent prizes awarded to francophone authors precisely for mastery over a certain French tradition; for example, the Congolese author Alain Maban Kou (Renaudot 2006), the Afghan-born Atiq Rahimi (Goncourt 2008) and Tierno Monénembo from Guinea (Renaudot 2008).⁸ Actually reading through a thematic lens such as that of encounter also precludes simplistically aligning postcolonial texts to a new global multiculturalism by requiring the terms of the encounter to be called up rather than focusing on celebrating 'difference'.

The theme of bilingualism springs in texts ranging from Albert Memmi's *Pillar of Salt*, whose young hero, Alexandre, painstakingly struggles to master French over patois, across to Abdourahman Waberi's *In the United States of Africa*, with its bicultural protagonist.⁹ For the late Moroccan sociologist and writer Abdelkébir Khatibi, bilingualism will produce an aesthetic and an ethics for the 'other thought', which is not yet thought, but which stems from a *double critique* of both Western sociology and Arab metaphysics, as he presents it most cogently in *Maghreb pluriel*.¹⁰ In this way, early literary production by colonials such as René Maran's 1921 *Batouala*¹¹ or the prolific Algerian Mohammed Dib's (1920–2003) earlier realist fiction already anticipates, in the

phenomenological descriptions of colonial space, for instance, the effects of the brutal divisions that colonialism sought to establish and which marked their generation. The development of such understanding of these divisions into forms of antagonism became anchored in the literary text as linguistic and situational ambiguity, a particular type of naïveté in aid of irony as Bernard Dadié's *An African in Paris* (1959) spectacularly presents it, and a proper theorization of the gaze.¹² Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* (1961) along with Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy* (1956) anticipate Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter* (1979), through reflecting upon the formative importance of 'French' school across African colonies (or in the case of Oyono's Toundi, immersion in French culture and especially language), as opposed to either Qur'anic school, trade-based schooling in the family or tribal *métier*, or other forms of schooling in African languages and culture.¹³ The French school becomes a hugely important factor in creating the elites who would write the foundational texts of postcolonial French literature and spawned generations of non-French creators of brilliant French works of literature. At the historical moment when Fanon, Memmi and Glissant were of school age, French school was the only option in Martinique and in Tunisia that any ambitious young person would have seen as the means to succeed. Memmi's Alexandre, the young Jewish boy from the ghetto in Tunis, provides a poignant narrative of alienation from the Jewishness of his family (that is inseparable from poverty) as well as from the privileged French children of colonial school.¹⁴ A more emblematic example from Martinique is Joseph Zobel's José from his novel *Black-Shack Alley* (1930) – now better known through Euzhan Palcy's magnificent film.¹⁵ Here, José's epic struggle, launched and sustained by his grandmother, to stay in French school, etches this theme into postcolonial writing of the moment.

Anchored in schooling but going well beyond it, the ideas of bilingualism, biculturalism and double identity are all at the heart of what would turn out to be not just thematic presences but an aesthetic factor in the three writers under consideration. In their work, it becomes archetypal and thus makes them eminent instantiations of a particular moment, which together they both define and transform. Moreover, this in-between would become emblematic of francophone writing, not simply as the space between the colonizer and colonized, but rolled over backward, it reclaimed a history of transformation within French writing since the French Revolution or even earlier. Voltaire's pamphlets are of a piece with his articles in the *Philosophical Dictionary* and his short stories.¹⁶ At the same time, Voltaire and the Philosophers were already carving out an image of otherness (the Negro from Surinam in *Candide*, the

good savage in Rousseau), essential to understanding Western civilization and to their critique of it. These conceptual processes and divisions already anticipated colonial practices to follow.¹⁷ Montesquieu's 1725 *Persian Letters* transformed the country bumpkin into the naïve Persian traveller and effectively injected the novel form with a narrative consciousness of discrete, distant and incommensurable semiotic spaces.¹⁸ While the nineteenth-century French novel would develop into almost epic form, it absorbed and made its own both the breath of 'reality' folded into structure itself, as seen in Balzac, as well as the painstaking and obsessive awareness of perspective characteristic of Flaubert. Although the primary encounter then seemed to privilege the monumental confrontation of bourgeois excess and moral decrepitude with working-class poverty and struggle, of which the Zola novel remains a superb example, it is well known how much these representations built, with greater detail and the authority of 'information' (conveyed by way of missionary accounts, voyagers, traders and early colonialist journals and writing), upon the earlier cursory tropes of otherness, that, despite the deleterious effects, were forged in the service of a revolutionary ideal. So, if difference functioned to critique France's system of authority, power and inequalities before the Revolution, images of the same inferior otherness seeped into the realist novel or exotic poetry; and (canonically inclined) readings of them perpetuate forms of exclusion and othering, as Françoise Lionnet has convincingly shown regarding Baudelaire's relationship to colonialism as it has emerged in critical interpretation, even when the latter might be inclined towards a postcolonial perspective.¹⁹ In other words, the models of the canon already offered an ethically identifiable aesthetic that this postcolonial moment would irrevocably seize. But they also structured such an aesthetic mode through processes that became inherent to literary narrative and which structurally objectified and excluded spaces and processes of understanding that would be mobilized in postcolonial writing. It is the same idea Glissant had when writing of Faulkner:

One can deplore that Faulkner's work has tended to treat Blacks as things. Nonetheless, through suspense, fragmentation, uncertainty, deferral, the writing of these works has made it likely – and has even authorized a time to exist, a time near our own, when these stories will meet; when these diversified poetics will be united in networks and rhizomes, when these lineages will lose some of the exclusivity that has been the basis of their demands...²⁰

Entry into the French language through these models of thought, critique and narration for the first writers from the other side of the encounter was both

enabled and constrained by these factors. Kateb Yacine had recognized, even earlier than Glissant, that same space in Faulkner. In an interview discussing his book, *Nedjma*,²¹ he admits that Faulkner is the type of man he 'detests most'. But why his writing was crucial was because in it there was a close encounter (*corps à corps*) with the reality of the characters, despite 'his reactionary side, his puritanical side, that was racist and sometimes fascinating'.²² In their own time-frame, these writers were also profoundly influenced by the crystallization of such tendencies in French writing of calling up opposing or incommensurable semiotic spaces that was so evident in the Baudelairean aesthetic and soon revolutionized by Mallarmé and later Blanchot. This fed directly from the Dadaists to the Surrealists, who would be part and parcel of the impact of Negritude. As Glissant notes in an interview, the whole team of not just Surrealists but a certain core of French intelligentsia including André Breton, Max Ernst, André Masson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Wilfredo Lam and Pierre Mabile were physically present in Martinique in 1941, to join the Martiniquans Césaire, René Ménil and Aristide Maugée, who also formed the core of the influential journal *Tropiques*.²³ It is significant that while these individuals were salient intellectuals in the political climate of anti-colonialism, they were also central to the crystallization in French literary aesthetics of a form of unity of oppositional forces, which subtend the revolutionized notion of harmony in the work of art. Without entering into discussion of the influence of 'exotic' cultures in this literary/aesthetic endeavour we can still recall Roland Barthes and China, Antonin Artaud and Bali,²⁴ as well as Picasso's fascination with African art, to name just a few instances of fascination with otherness that were at the heart of artistic revolution. Yet it is perhaps this very structure of French thought that drew energy from new ways of uniting with difference and incommensurability, which became the limits of opposition to colonialism from within it.

So, when Memmi agrees, in an interview, that his *Strangers* is a Racinian *récit*,²⁵ he does not find such a proposition at all condescending because of the entirely natural way in which there was seizure of French, by the colonized elites, through French assimilatory practices that included the establishment of French schools, essay competitions, scholarships to travel to France and the ultimate dream of departmentalizing the colonies of which fantasy Algeria stands as a bloody counterexample. This dream was not a wild fantasy, though, when one considers the trajectory of a politician like Michel Debré, who was prime minister of France from 1959 to 1962. Although he gained attention under Pétain, he went on to become an out-and-out Gaullist who defended French Algeria. But what is interesting in this context is Debré's decision after

the Evian Accords, through which Algeria was deemed an independent nation, to go to the small French island-department of La Réunion where he managed to get himself elected as mayor in opposition to the nationalist-minded communist party headed by Paul Vergès. In other words, the close ties in both intellectual and political terms between France and its colonies was much more intimate through these types of ambitions that were tied to political careers, and not only in one direction: René Maran, for example, would go on to become a *fonctionnaire* and serve as a representative of the colonial government in French Equatorial Africa.

This type of deploying of colonial elites within the French Empire was much more pervasive than we might observe in any other colonial enterprise, and the special place held by Caribbean *évolués* in this hierarchy is enormously significant to literary and intellectual history. It is thus no myth that French assimilatory practices preyed on colonized people's deep desire for wholeness, for which the promise of career building, particularly for men, seemed an enticing offer.²⁶ Although elites were intermediaries and often enjoyed different treatment from mere 'natives' in other colonial contexts as well, French colonialism practised a particular type of stratification of its colonials and offered immediate illusions of assimilation in a form of power that was impossible to resist without drastic rejection. Few were able to accomplish such outright rejection, as did Fanon with poetic flourish in 1956 when he resigned from the psychiatric division of the Blida-Joinville hospital. This rejection, as Fanon explained, resided in the unassailable fact that the notion of 'curing' was absurd while around him colonialism 'dehumanized' an entire people. In the case of René Maran, although he was Guyanese, many consider his home to be in Martinique's Fort-de-France since, as is well known, his birth poetically occurred on a boat while his parents were making the trip to Martinique from their native Guyana. His novel, *Batouala*, being the first book by a black author to win the prestigious Goncourt, thus also beckoned authors from beyond France's shores to infiltrate French prize worthiness as early as in 1921.²⁷

This is not to simplify the use of French by colonized intellectuals, nor to suggest that there were no ruptures of French through diglossia, but rather that these aspects of colonial elites' biculturalism had already been thoroughly theorized at the level of education and formation (in the French sense) such that occupying the ambiguity of that position, even as early as Fanon, is seen less as something to lament than as an inevitable reality that could be wielded as strength: Césaire had already proclaimed French to be a miraculous weapon. Although Fanon himself would be deeply anguished, it was not from a sense of biculturalism but rather from the inequity within its parameters in colonial

culture. Such inequity proceeded from the fact of his black body being apprehended in, and interpellated by, white culture.²⁸ This self-conscious assumption of biculturalism and bilingualism that marked the inception of francophone literature becomes part of a political/aesthetic form at the moment identified in this chapter, and is contended with in diverse ways in the literature that follows. Making encounter central, then, encounter with otherness at the level of self and the gendered, racialized or ethnicized other, with land, with language and with culture, can tell of both a chronological history as well as a more explosive history of moments that can draw together different periods, authors and realities.

Three writers in the mangrove

The mangrove is an apt image, made well known by the Guadeloupean author Maryse Condé in her now canonical *Crossing the Mangrove*, which evokes intersecting realities without privileging a centre, and whose beginning and end are not the prerogatives of any observer.²⁹ Such is Condé's story of Francis Sancher, the ex-colonial whose dead body provokes a series of reflections in the form of 'voices' and thus provides multiple perspectives on an event, on history and on identity. Seeing our three authors in this way amplifies the moment, and indeed destroys it as a singular and contained objectivity, because its compactness cannot be delineated.

Aimé Césaire, who was intimately connected to French thought while sharply aware of his historical place in it as a colonized man, marked the intellectual milieu that would feed francophone writing in the immediate. Michael Dash notes in his introduction to the translation of Glissant's first novel that what Césaire brought with him on his return from France to Martinique, where he would become a professor at the Lycée Schoelcher, was 'this modern notion of the poetic imagination as an instrument of revolution'.³⁰ The 'best' of francophone writing has also been less easy to align with the trends and movements identified in postcolonial theory. Such texts (Césaire's *Notebook of a Return*, Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* or *Malemort*, Memmi's *Scorpion*, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, Assia Djebar's *Fantasia*, Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma*, for example) return to the subject and destabilize its self-assuredness.³¹ The notion of destabilizing the subject might have become explicitly theorized as revolutionary in hexagonal French thought in the post-modern era, but for these francophone texts, such an aesthetics of openness, ambiguity and the demand for the agency of the reader are compelling in a different way because they have been invented creatively from within the aesthetic constraints of French literary history when they 'met' (to evoke

Glissant's statement on Faulkner's blacks) the reality of the theoretical spaces of otherness. These moves in the postcolonializing process targeted the self-assured white subject in the form of the colonialist, the rigidity of separation between white culture that was inaccessible and any 'other' culture that was inferior, and the central authority vested in colonial power to unmake the myths and stories of entire peoples. This combative impulse, arising more widely in postcolonial writing from urgent realities, imbued the narrative with a sense of responsibility that, actually less easily identifiable in unambiguous form in the francophone text, is recognized in postcolonial criticism as the various forms of social realism. Francophone writing on the whole seems somehow more deeply invested in experimental form and theorizing thought about reality than in direct social critique. It is to Homi Bhabha's credit that what he sought to do in providing a particular version of Fanon to the anglophone world was precisely to liberate the writerly aspect of Fanon, the *jouissance* that would prevent easy recuperation of Fanon in the form of single-line manifestos for violence, against colonialism, for African nationalism, for example.³² However, Fanon's *jouissance* was also deeply intertwined with real struggle for liberation from historically weighty forms of domination upon his actions, his experiences and his writing. This interconnection between desire and reality, between poetics and politics, between thought and action is the essence of Fanon's creativity. And none other will understand this better than Glissant, who in many ways is Fanon's kindred spirit. What Glissant has sustained in his writing is the poignancy and continued relevance of encounter as an epistemological shock bearing all the force of Fanon's anguished cry before the almost casual 'Look, a negro!'³³ At the same time, Glissant also accomplishes, in some measure, a positive continuation of the utopian elements in Fanon which, there, were articulated in inchoate moments often mistaken for a misinformed humanism, as in Bhabha's reading,³⁴ but that in Glissant were absorbed and thoroughly theorized in that totalizing movement of reality into thought which is at the heart of the process of what he calls Relation.

Thus, examining the work of these three thinkers as forming a core discourse allows us to view postcolonial writing (here, of the francophone tradition) as not simply responding to the colonial moment, though centrally concerned with it; it can also be seen as an interconnected discourse, which, by virtue of its historical positioning reworks and reinvents notions of the in-between. In this sense their thought incarnates what the Moroccan sociologist Abdelkébir Khatibi famously termed 'unthought thought' or more accurately other thought (*la pensée autre*).³⁵ Of these three theorists, Fanon has been taken up the most widely across literature and theoretical writing in all languages, while

Glissant's entry into mainstream postcolonial studies has been more tentative. Memmi is less known outside francophone circles although his influence also permeates through his Jewish identity. In the case of Fanon, even in the most transnationally applicable parts of his writing, the particular French context of colonialism and of French language is an ineluctable element of his thought. In fact, it is the basic, humanistically inclined Frenchness of Fanon's thought that would become a thorn in the side of a more postmodernist appropriation of it. The impulse is shared – and not ironically in any way – with the French thinkers of his time and beyond, towards collective good that also sustains notions of French universalism: 'What we choose', wrote Sartre, 'is always the better; and nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all.'³⁶

That revolutionary moment of protest preceding formal independences was prolonged through Glissant and Fanon into the aesthetics of a process based in a notion of a progressive totality beyond the moment that these writers themselves could have conceived. And this beyond could not be the fusion of the Negritude moment into that of the proletariat, as per Sartre's analyses in *Black Orpheus*.³⁷ In Glissant's case, the idea of Relation has a self-referentiality much like Deleuze and Guattari's conception of becoming, which is nothing but itself.³⁸ Fanon's work carried in it the anticipation of one of the central ideas shared by later strands of postmodernism: and that is, recognition of the constructed nature of our understanding of reality. But it also carries the Marxian impulse, which is far from contrary to the latter, to study how reality as we know it is only a phantom in the process in which objects lose the reality of their (use) value by the changeable nature of exchange value.

Glissant, born in 1928 in Martinique, would begin his career in poetic form and transform his novelistic writing into the poetic aesthetic that for him was born of the contact between man and land. Amongst his early poetic writing from the 1950s, we can signal *Un champ d'îles* and *Les Indes*.³⁹ As early as this, we see Glissant adopt a different voice in his poetry than might be expected given his activities in France since his arrival in 1946 and his collaboration with other intellectuals involved in the decolonization struggle. Under de Gaulle, he was banned from Martinique until 1965. Before beginning his career in US academic institutions, Glissant established the Institut Martiniquais d'Études, founded the journal *Acoma* and also spent several years as the editor of a UNESCO newsletter from Paris. Particularly in *Les Indes*, which rethinks Columbus's historic arrival in America, Glissant's call for a historical and collective consciousness is already evident; and while this epic poem is dense in its imagery, it prefigures the much later collection of essays published in 1981, and translated by J. Michael Dash as *Caribbean Discourse* as late as 1989.⁴⁰

Likewise Glissant's first novel *La Lézarde* (1958), set in Martinique, would only be translated, again by Dash, in 1985 as the *Ripening*.⁴¹ His most influential essay after the earlier *Intention Poétique* (1969) is probably *Poetics of Relation* (1990).⁴² These and other essays as well as his latest fiction record Glissant's continued fascination with processes of creolization that both exemplify his native landscape and inform his intellectual framework and the strong influence of Deleuzian thought.

Fanon was born in Martinique in 1925 and attended the Lycée Schoelcher in the capital, Fort-de-France, at about the same time as Glissant, who would have been younger. Both were profoundly influenced, as were perhaps any young Martiniquans of the time, by the monumental figure of Aimé Césaire (who returned from France to teach at this school). *Black Skin, White Masks* was published in France on the eve of Fanon's departure to Algeria, as head of psychiatry of the Blida-Joinville hospital in Algiers, with the status of a French *fonctionnaire*.⁴³ He had served in the French army in World War II and then studied in Lyons on a French scholarship. Unfortunately, the plays he is supposed to have written as a student have not been located. From 1956 Fanon was associated with the party newspaper, *El Moudjahid*, after he had joined the revolutionary *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) in 1954 and he even went to Ghana as the ambassador of the provisional Algerian government. The two works associated most widely with Fanon are *Black Skin, White Masks*, which first appeared in 1952, and *Wretched of the Earth*, which appeared in 1961 with a preface by Sartre, at Fanon's request, in the year he died in Maryland (USA) of leukaemia.⁴⁴ *A Dying Colonialism* appeared in 1959 as *L'An cinq de la révolution algérienne*,⁴⁵ and contains the famous essay on women in the revolutionary period in Algeria, while *Toward the African Revolution* was published posthumously in 1964 and brings together, amongst other pieces, essays that had appeared in *El Moudjahid*.⁴⁶

Born in Tunis in 1920, Albert Memmi grew up near the Jewish ghetto. He began his education at the Hebrew school but by age twelve he went to the French *lycée*. These experiences are documented in the highly autobiographical first novel *Pillar of Salt*.⁴⁷ His studies at the University of Algiers were interrupted by Vichy rule, during which he was sent into forced labour in Tunisia. He returned to complete his *licence* in Philosophy in 1943, and in 1946, moved to France. From 1923 French law made it easier for Jews to become French citizens; in 1940, under Vichy rule, Jews were subject to the same laws as in Vichy France, following which there was a full-fledged German presence in Tunisia and deportations to European camps. Memmi returned to Tunis with his French wife, an experience recorded loosely in his second novel, translated

as *Strangers*.⁴⁸ Memmi then turned to the essay form: *Colonizer and Colonized* appeared in 1957, followed by *Portrait of a Jew* and *Liberation of the Jew*, both in 1962, and later by *Racism* and *À contre-courants* (Against the Tide).⁴⁹ His later fiction includes *Scorpion* and *Désert*.⁵⁰ In Paris, Memmi has been affiliated with the *Centre national de recherche scientifique* (CNRS) as well as the Sorbonne and served for many years as president of the French chapter of PEN.

For Fanon it was first the generalizability of colonial domination that interested him as a structural repetition of something like the essence of domination. Fanon's critique of Octave Mannoni's theory of the dependency complex of colonized peoples was based in his opposition to Mannoni's distinctions amongst different forms of racism. He showed inferiority to be a result of colonial domination rather than the cause of it, as Mannoni suggested. Regarding women or the 'masses', Fanon has been critiqued by feminists either for overstating women's role in the revolution or somehow reducing them to silence on the one hand, and on the other, by Neil Lazarus, for example, for not accounting properly for the place of the masses. If Lazarus finds his 'utopian conceptualization of the national liberation struggle'⁵¹ was unfounded because, in hindsight, that is not how things played out for these constituencies, perhaps it is equally possible to see utopia differently. That is, there was nothing utopian (in the sense of unreal or unrealizable) regarding the revolutionary role of women in the struggle as Fanon witnessed it and simultaneously wrote about it. Fanon was able to identify how women were and could be equal agents by assuming such an active stance in the creation and forging of their nation. We might thus say that it is reality that has recorded a failure and retrogression from that revolutionary period, and ask why and how women gave up that possible position forged in the anti-colonial struggle. Madhu Dubey, in her inimitable article, excavates Fanon's text for clarity of analysis regarding the necessity to de-link women from tradition and Europeanism from modernity.⁵² This deeply creative and insightful aspect of Fanon's writing was a formative part of the instantiation of postcolonial literature in French. The second lasting mark, which lengthens and opens wide the pre-independence moment, is his conception of this historical process, to which, Fanon writes, 'the unforeseeable should have been opposed'.⁵³ Seeing reality in its unforeseeable possibility, which is somewhat different from being utopian, becomes essential to the writing form, early in francophone texts.

Memmi, who once wrote literally as the 'colonized' and for the colonized, went through a process, of which the most important point was, one might say, that of moving to France from Tunisia rather than to Israel or anywhere else in the world. Caught up in French intellectual circles, his Jewishness becomes a

dominant factor. In his more recent work, his analyses seem to simply turn on the colonized for the lack of progress made since independence, while he allies himself with a more traditional Jewish position in French thought, which is strongly tied to French Republicanism. He sets up the lack of progress as a result of the colonized simply not 'wanting' to make any effort. Similarly, he accuses the Arab world of not 'wanting' to consider modernization as a way of participating in the universal movement in which all nations are implicated.⁵⁴ It did not help Memmi that another self-identified Jew of visibly right-wing orientation, Alain Finkielkraut, would speak to the media from this very position, blaming, as had Memmi more generally in considering France's failed multiculturalism, the black and Arab youth (mostly Muslims) who took part in the 2005 riots. Without going into the details of Memmi's and Finkielkraut's positions, we may note their departure from an established convention of French-Jewish thought (durably anchored in the intellectual tradition of Léon Blum) that has always been linked to left-leaning positions and the idea that French universalism can appeal to and absorb any particularity by the soundness of its universal values. Memmi would never be able to transcend his dismay at being rejected by his Arab brothers within the newly independent Muslim state of Tunisia. This dismay and disappointment become a resentment that his analyses of immigrant behaviour in France will betray, moving him away from his experiences as a Jew *through*, among other things, the experience of poverty and exclusion.

In some ways, one might say that it is Fanon who would espouse the Sartrean idea – from the latter's 1945 *Anti-Semite and Jew* – that the unity of a group comes from a common situation.⁵⁵ Memmi would become more invested in the content of Jewishness to combat Sartre's definition that is built strategically through negation, and perhaps somewhat predictably, he would conceive of Israel as a formative solution. In this sense, Memmi is less committed, particularly after his first two novels and his first essay on the colonial situation, to postcolonialize the Jewish position through solidarity as well as through aesthetically bound moves, which we might identify in literary terms in the forms of analogy, metaphor and juxtaposition or various forms of thematic connection between the position of Jews and other dominated populations across history, geography and political boundaries. We might see in this, more generally, the limits to connections that are possible between Jewish experience and thought and postcolonial thought of the same period. Or it might indicate the individual choice or predicament of Memmi to write, in the end, from a Jewish identity rather than a colonized one. Without needing to reduce Memmi's writing to one or the other, it is legitimate to trace a shift in his own thought from a pan-colonized position of solidarity of colonized and dominated peoples to a Jewish perspective regarding historical

persecution from the position of a North African Jew having lived through colonialism and Nazism. In *Portrait of a Jew*, Memmi's take on Jewishness jumps from singular experience to universalisms that lack theoretical and narrative conviction.⁵⁶ Following this publication, in the *Liberation of the Jew*, Memmi describes the rupture that Glissant has productively recuperated into form, whereas Memmi ends on a note of despair, returning to a lack of 'content' for Jewishness because of the ruptured history: 'To affirm my Jewishness without giving it a specific content would have been an empty proposition and in the final analysis contradictory';⁵⁷ and later 'In the final analysis, to accept being a Jew is to consent to the whole drama, including the cultural drama. And the source of the cultural drama was to be found in language, but the language of the Jew was in bits and pieces, as all his culture was in bits and pieces if there was a culture.'⁵⁸ Simply put, as an *évolué* who chose France, Memmi is able to better accomplish liberation from colonial inferiority through language and literary recognition than he is from Jewish victimhood even as an elite. His inability to bring together the two in himself is directly linked to colonial assimilatory practices whereby by all accounts Memmi was successfully assimilated to French status upon his arrival in France, becoming a legitimate resident and a recognized intellectual having won various literary prizes including the Fénéon. His disappointment in discovering that anti-Semitism exists in the workingman and amongst the blacks in Dakar's shantytown is surprising and borders on lamentation.⁵⁹ In any event, Memmi states that he has 'been forced to admit that this instinctive solidarity with the downtrodden, which I do not deny and which I shall continue to proclaim will not save me . . . even if those downtrodden of yesterday were finally to take their revenge; for their cause is not exactly mine'.⁶⁰

Glissant would be translated much later than Fanon and Memmi and his rather opaque writing would keep him from being deployed as an authority as widely as Fanon (often in simplified or contracted form) or even his other well-known Caribbean compatriot Antonio Benítez-Rojo. In fact, he would appeal most to postcolonialists of a decidedly postmodernist inclination. Yet, Glissant would also, like Fanon, provide endless inspiration for a range of writers of the francophone regions, well beyond Caribbean shores. To consider Memmi alongside Fanon and Glissant is to irrevocably tie them to French colonial history and the experience of French assimilatory politics. It is also to acknowledge along a continuum the events in contemporary France as having a deep-seated psychological reality that was of a piece with the economic, political and cultural mode of domination and hegemony of the colonial era, which sparked in these three thinkers, as in a whole generation, an extreme reaction that forever would be the source of their emotional responses and intellectual

enterprises. The transnational frame accords very well with the notion of diaspora in francophone literature, which is theorized and aestheticized saliently in representations of Caribbean reality. Soon the postcolonial condition would strongly espouse diaspora as a form of space-making rather than as a given through history. Memmi somehow capitalizes less on rupture as possibility than is the case with Fanon and Glissant, nor does he pick up the doubleness from language as an aesthetic impulse from which hybridity is liberating, as is the case with other North African writers negotiating the presence of Arabic (and Berber) within the French text. However, like Glissant, but also like Kateb Yacine, Memmi will allow his characters re-entry in the corpus of his work and thus creates a veritable fictive space in which to enact his own version of the encounter. Memmi's peculiar migration toward Jewishness serves to acknowledge the multiple intellectual trajectories that the same moment spawned through the intellectualization of experience and the theoretical difficulty of thinking beyond ethnic identity particularly when it is tied to historical victimhood.

While Memmi was in forced labour camps in Tunisia, Fanon served with the *Tirailleurs sénégalais* only to return to Martinique already disillusioned with the idea of Frenchness, as David Macy has documented.⁶¹ Albert Memmi's public fall-out with his friend, Albert Camus, suggests some clues regarding the untenable position of 'French' Africans. Camus, of course, as a *pied noir* born in the colony of Algeria, believed fully that French humanism would eventually be capable of restoring humanity and bringing the best to Arab culture. While Memmi felt acutely his difference from Frenchness and was able to recognize his common cause with Arabs, his position was that although he felt himself to be a 'French' African, the *pied noir* was still a colonizer, still a Frenchman, and thus blind to the deep and total transformation of colonial terms that was needed for Africans to be liberated. Claire Denis's 1988 film *Chocolat*, which is set in Cameroon, is a striking rumination on the position of the French African for a generation of young African children of French parentage, who left Africa at that moment of revolution but for whom the only home, Africa, was equally impossible.⁶² Illustrating this predicament, the little France Dalens and the young houseboy Prothée have an exquisitely developed friendship whose impossibility is cleverly inscribed in the first name of the child.

The spectre of Fanon

What is remarkable is the way in which Fanon gave new life to the poetry of Negritude, casting it in direct dialogue with Sartre. Césaire does evoke the Sartrean hero most notably in the form of his Caliban in *Tempest*, when the

character casts off false consciousness in the dramatic end and frees himself from the constraints that such consciousness imposed upon him through Prospero.⁶³ However, Césaire's poetry is really where one glimpses the coming together of his aesthetics and politics. That is to say, particularly in *Notebook of a Return*, what one sees is not so much the dialectic, nor even existential anguish cast in black terms, but really a deep engagement with the mystical, the mythic, the unconscious;⁶⁴ in fact it is where Césaire blazes a metaphysical path quite contrary to a decision, most often attributed to him, whereby Martinique entered departmental status in 1946 (see Murdoch, this volume). That movement joins up with Fanon's lasting gesture towards a human existence outside blackness. The surrealist poets seem almost trivial beside the weight of responsibility felt by the young black students who found themselves in Paris to be, quite simply, niggers. And from this experience would arise a cry that came to be called Negritude, and which sought to encompass the whole world well beyond the context of blackness or Africanness. When Césaire pronounced French to be a miraculous weapon, it was not merely against French colonialism or supremacy. Rather, what he saw was that it enabled a leap towards the survival of humanity in the creativity it allowed him in particular.

By the time Fanon wrote *Black Skin*, the poetic form of Negritude already seemed somehow far removed from the political upheaval that was being felt across the African continent and beyond.⁶⁵ There was also, of course, the disillusionment associated with the scope of Negritude since the decision to departmentalize Martinique. For Fanon there is added militancy, a renewed energy to be drawn from the powerful poetry of Césaire, Léopold Senghor or Léon Damas, as he brings out the black man's self-mocking and self-acceptance when scrutinizing the historical juncture that produced Negritude. The need for self-affirmation is strongly felt beyond the individualistic or biographical interpretation we often find, and it is in this vein we might view the narrative 'I' of *Black Skin* which assumes the voice of a universal/historical black man at the dawn of decolonization.⁶⁶ Without denying the high complexity of *Black Skin*, we may note the tendency in postcolonial critical studies to become overly invested in metaphor, image and symbol in granting this text almost biblical proportions when all referentiality happens within its sutured whole. In this sense, when reading *Black Skin* there is resistance to truly allowing intertextual dialogue between this text and other accounts of such lived experience, but also more specifically between *Black Skin* and many experiences of blackness under colonialism, which are documented in fictional and non-fictional forms.⁶⁷ Such links with other texts, including the interviews Fanon will later

evoke from his time at Blida-Joinville in Algeria, suggest hybrid spaces that are strongly linked to the realities of colonial domination. Hybridity in the complex form it has taken in postcolonial studies is thus not just some inadequate category to impose on Fanon; rather, reading Fanon carefully suggests a different framing for hybridity itself and it also allows us to effectively link Fanon more productively to Glissant's theorization of hybridity as the endless process of Relation.⁶⁸

Fanon's essay 'Algeria unveiled' reclaims Algerian women's identity as self-fashioning through participation in revolutionary action.⁶⁹ This essential Fanonian idea, also to be seen in his remarks about peasants' revolutionary action in *Wretched*, marks francophone literary writing as much as it has revolutionary groups such as the Black Panthers in the US or the Tamil Tigers in South Asia.⁷⁰ In the literary field, the ultimate space for, in Fanon's somewhat romantic terms, 'pure' or 'absolute' identity comes through reinvention of form: the form of narration, of the conception of the black man, of thought itself, and of collective desire.⁷¹ It is this more than any other aspect of Fanon's writing that is pervasive in the best of literary writing that draws explicitly or implicitly from Fanon. While these may be somewhat more difficult to locate in imputing influence upon younger writers, it is quite centrally present in Glissant or a writer such as the Algerian Assia Djebar, both of whom are intimately familiar with his life and his work.

Another quintessential quality of Fanon's writing, which also lends itself to being placed in a Marxian framing, is the oscillation between particular and general. While refusing Mannoni's division of racisms, Fanon makes several moves to separate the Jew from the black, for instance. The difficulty of being black at the time is clearly recognized to come from the most basic and immediate form of difference as it is articulated in appearance. But this is what distinguishes the black from the Jew. It seems quite obvious that Fanon struggled with this requirement of specificity for he is hardly convincing when he writes that the Jews might have been pursued, exterminated and incinerated, but that those were small familial quarrels.⁷² Yet this form of struggle is not evident in Memmi. Sartre's text provides a backdrop to Fanon's work, as can be followed simply through the notes of the latter. Fanon seems to choose distinction between the Jew and the black because the black is lynched in (and because of) his body and thus knows his difference first as immediate and real physical danger, while the Jew is first and foremost an idea. Perhaps there is truth to this understanding, although the ultimate fate of Jews was so intensely material; but Fanon's return to the body of the black man is best seen as a historically informed move proceeding from the situation of the black man,

which Fanon understands first and foremost from experience. From a literary perspective, Fanon's theoretical writings thus adopted various poetic devices in order to speak through many voices, and irony is one of them.⁷³ But the problem is that irony did not render one position wrong and the other right; rather, it showed how every 'right' position required to be forged *in situ*, from which the entire structure would project a totality we might name utopia in the ultimate project of liberation. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's influential concept of 'strategic essentialism' encapsulates the same motivation, and in the franco-phone novel this same concept has been present though unnamed and has given much impetus to narrative form.⁷⁴ Fanon's refusal to forge ethical positions severed from experience and history has sometimes been seen as a romantic humanism when it is better recognized as fierce dedication to coherence and unity of purpose in revolutionary and liberating goals alongside strong analytical commitment. Without this combination any politics would be fettered to particularities and immediacy and risk becoming desperate terrorism. Such an ultimately humanistic scope for every act is informed by a central aesthetic, which is also its ethics. Fanon's undying legacy, because it is as poetic as it is revolutionary, provides lasting attractiveness for those who are both idealistic and strongly drawn to action.

The way Fanon was able to make explicit the effects of the stark division between black and white would also mark literary creation in terms of its aesthetics. Whether it be Memmi's essays on situations of inequity, or his adventures with bilingualism or biculturalism in his autobiographical novels, the process of entry into the double space and of marking the margins extends and draws upon Fanonian work to properly define these spaces not simply in terms of their physical and political reality but really in terms of the entire psychological canvas that ensued from it. Ferdinand Oyono's novel published four years after the French *Black Skin* stands as perhaps the most active and immediate aesthetic realization of Fanon's work and participates in developing a style of writing that, like Fanon's, becomes an intervention into the historical moment of its conception.⁷⁵ The aspirations to intervene through form and structure as ways of thinking contained in this aspect of postcolonial writing in French somehow marginalize simplistic and nostalgic imitation of or returns to prior forms, language and thought in ways that are perhaps unique and related to the sense of history, of the agency of individuals and peoples in history that was crucial to the legitimacy established even for 'writing back'. For example, Abdelkébir Khatibi's *Mémoire tatouée*, whose subtitle is the 'autobiography of a decolonized man', would actively experiment with form, with the experience of colonialism and its effects on thought processes and

memories, even as it is an active return of the gaze as was *Black Skin*.⁷⁶ The actual creation of the text is seen as a form of agency in Fanon's terms, situated between the languages of French, standard Arabic and the narrator's spoken dialectal form of Arabic. As the narrator writes: 'The West is a part of me that I, cannot deny inasmuch as I struggle against all occidents and orients that oppress and disenchant me.'⁷⁷ Like Fanon's absolute desire for freedom, the decolonizing act here is extended to combat every form of oppression, thus validating the field's recognition in the 1980s that the meaning of postcolonialism had to go beyond a simple response to the isolated oppression ensuing from nineteenth-century colonialism. This valuable aspect of the reach and continued validity of postcolonialism for different but interconnected forms of oppression is echoed in the simple but efficacious idea of 'to postcolonialize', a verb form now used by many to mean something akin to 'decolonize' or 'liberate', while having an explicit intention in Quayson to enlarge postcolonialism's task to combat different hierarchies.⁷⁸ It is in the same sense that Khatibi proposed a 'double subversion' as he sought to think that 'unthought thought' which he termed *la pensée autre*.⁷⁹ Memmi exemplifies an important recognition within postcolonial studies of the usefulness of specificity in advocating for real dominated populations. Forgetting his own criticism of Camus, Memmi is less prepared to thoroughly rethink and reformulate the meaning of his Jewish identity with and through his status as an assimilated postcolonial individual.

At the same time, it is paradoxical to note that while Fanon vehemently denied Sartre's idea of the poet of Negritude being thrown up as genius through historical circumstance and necessity, Memmi appropriates this very idea in an interview: 'In a sense, I had the good fortune. I mean that it was luck for a writer to find himself to coincide in part, with a moment, a significant slice of the history of the world.'⁸⁰ Memmi's experience and dispositions attached him to the realities he has lived, while Fanonian anguish in reality pulled this thought towards theorizing its possibility. Such consciousness in both cases of the position and responsibility of the writer is an acute sense of historical awareness. In fact, this preoccupation both weighs down and liberates francophone writing more than any of its postcolonial counterparts. Whether we see this in Djébar's highly self-conscious representation of Algerian women and her almost perverse presentation of colonial perspective,⁸¹ Glissant's obsessive attention to form and painstaking development of intricate circularity within his narrative prose and poetry, or more recently Patrick Chamoiseau's dizzying array of narrative voices, this historical consciousness of narrating has become an ethical element of francophone aesthetics.⁸²

In a 1971 article that appeared in *Esprit* magazine, Albert Memmi rebukes Fanon for not having returned to Martinique and fought in the Caribbean context.⁸³ This is revealing of a different temperament: one that cannot withstand his own alienation from 'place'. Memmi's departure with the colonial government in 1956 from Tunisia for France appears to be a wound that has never healed. Like Fanon's, Memmi's work exemplifies a desire to liberate the self within the context of liberating the oppressed, the colonized, or the alienated as a people. His writing is frequently marked by the autobiographical impulse in both theme and structure. In his novel *Pillar of Salt*, he traces his childhood and the formative experience of his French education that would be both his blessing and his curse because, as for so many of his generation, the promise of assimilation through the French language had the corollary effect of alienation from his people, his language (here patois) and most consequentially any sense of home.⁸⁴ In this the resemblance with Fanon's experience is unmistakable, when Fanon, as an *acculturé*, the shining example of the French West Indian *assimilé*, arrives in Paris to find he is reduced to being a nigger. But Memmi's work, more than Fanon's, bears the trace of alienation in specific terms of class, language, place and ethnic identity. In Memmi's novel, the strongly autobiographical character Alexandre describes his home and his street that mimics the liminality of his own existence. The street is not quite in the Jewish ghetto but on the outskirts of the city.⁸⁵

A more interesting narrative set-up characterizes *Scorpion*, which is to be taken, according to its subtitle, as an 'imaginary confession'. This is a dramatic text, where the autobiographical familiarity with the first two novels (some secondary characters and spaces of his previous autobiographical novels reappear here) becomes complicated by the presence of multiple narrators. There is Imilio, the writer, who most obviously seems to be an incarnation of Memmi, although he depends on his brother Marcel, who will complete the perspectival task of looking at the character's life. Yet J. H., Imilio's young student, along with Makhlouf the old Jewish uncle, together present what are recognizably the young Memmi and the older Memmi. The impossibility for authoritarian narration characterizes this work, and is seen in the disagreements and concurrences of facts by the different voices. One might wish to recognize a return to Voltaire's notion of cultivating one's garden from the concluding wisdom of *Candide* as, if not a solution, at least a way of being in the world,⁸⁶ when Marcel claims that 'Wisdom means the handling of day-to-day existence.'⁸⁷ Memmi's great influencer Camus had also returned to this simple truth in the form of Sisyphus. Sisyphus takes as his task rolling his boulder up the mountain, but this 'absurd' man does not do it to reach the top or achieve anything nor is he

full of despair or rage. In fact, happiness is in the acceptance of the totality of the situation, to even thrive upon it. When Memmi's J. H. (which we might read to be 'jeune homme' or young man) commits suicide, the meaning is also left open like the colourful description of the death of the scorpion, which inaugurates the novel. Might we not see an unconscious desire in J. H.'s death, through which Memmi breaks symbolically with the thought of his own youthful ardour, an attempt to recuperate that Fanonian revolt which Memmi never was able to embrace in any convincing way? In the novel, there is some doubt as to whether the fictional scorpion, surrounded by fire, is to be seen as having committed suicide. Cleverly, it is the writer, the known romantic, who wishes to see it as suicide while his more practical brother, the ophthalmologist, views such an interpretation as ridiculous. That is an 'old wives' tale' he concludes because the scorpion just died of exhaustion.⁸⁸ This might contain an element of bitterness towards a different brother of Memmi's if we recall how that comrade's death would make him forever a martyr and a hero, particularly for its timing.

Fanon's early death made of him not simply a canonized figure, but his work and life gained a certain poetic defiance that eludes Memmi to this day. Various writers seek that Fanonian quality with a thirst that seems unconscious but which resides at the very core of francophone postcolonial literary innovation. In a more easily identifiable location, Memmi along with a host of writers of his generation and the next took up and continue their own struggles in language: 'The struggle with the French language, which is a superb language, is never ending.'⁸⁹ Glissant also writes: 'We no longer reveal totality within us by lightning flashes.'⁹⁰ Although Glissant is speaking of Césaire, the shadow of Fanon lurks within this image. Memmi will have a much more bitter evocation of Fanon's blazing life. He writes that Fanon is what he is not, a hero of the Third World. 'Heroes die young and I have not been able to escape growing old. The hero chooses tragedy, I plead for happiness . . . In any case, I refuse the demagoguery of just causes.'⁹¹ The idea of Fanon's eternal youth and the circumstances of his enduring poetics are echoed as well by Edouard Glissant. In this vein, we may observe a radiance and vibrancy to every Fanonian sentence. This ethereal picture of Fanon, however, is vindicated in the form of a politics that, fittingly, only Fanon knew how to make concrete. These ideas make their way into Glissant's view regarding why it is difficult to be 'the brother, the friend or quite simply the associate, the compatriot of Fanon, it is because he was the only one to have acted on his ideas'.⁹² Glissant will attribute Fanon's actions to what he calls the principle of diversion: that is, a population such as Martinique's experiences a cloaked form of domination,

one whose hold cannot be revealed from within; Fanon then seeks this principle elsewhere in Algeria and thus links the impossible situation in Martinique to the solutions found there. In these lines we find the idea that Fanon's poetry is the sum total of his life and his acts in a way that would henceforth prove impossible to replicate.

But there is another reason for which Fanon is to be remembered fully, treasured, and the full spectrum of his thought and acts reactivated specifically from within postcolonial studies: it is because it is he, more than Memmi, Césaire, Glissant, or the other most often cited theorists/writers/thinkers, can link us to the realities in the postcolonial world. It is in remembering the totality of Fanon's production of his persona, his legacy, his thoughts, his anguish and his suffering that we can perceive the importance of understanding the complexity in a single autobiography, the value of following the dénouement of a single life, the point of reading one novel. Both Memmi and Glissant share this understanding. The postcolonializing discourse of our three authors together invites us to consider authors such as the fiery Mongo Beti, alongside the highly ambiguous Henri Lopès, or the tragic life of Sony Labou Tansi, with political activists such as Patrice Lumumba or Roland Momie whose lives were also extinguished all too early. Creative expression being intrinsically linked in structure, mood and form with creative action through theorized purpose evident in movement of narrative and action best evokes the life/work of Fanon and characterizes, if we might be permitted such a judgment, the 'best' in postcolonial writing of the encounter, where encounter continues to bind together creativity in action and in thought.

Glissant provides quite literally a sea full of possibilities from within his long and prolific career. Forging a career between the monumental figures of Césaire and Fanon, Glissant's grandeur is quite different: it had to be. It comes from a certain endless quality that is recorded in the repetitions and reinvention that characterize his work and which has been the worthy subject of many scholars. The direct impact Glissant has had on Martiniquan writers is clear, and has been commented upon. It is no accident that Glissant is explicitly and consciously historical, linking his metaphors and meanderings to the movement of history. The writing of Simone Swartz-Barthes (especially in *Ti-Jean l'horizon*) would literally actualize Glissant's notions of openness, non-linearity, and the fluidity between history and fiction.⁹³ Maryse Condé would establish herself as a creolizer in her own right, reinventing the idea of the rhizome – so close to Glissant's development of this Deleuzian image – through the metaphor of mangrove and problematizing the relationship of the Caribbean to Africa from a female perspective.⁹⁴ It is clear that the authors

of *créolité*, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, began their collective thinking first in opposition to Negritude but also to Glissantian opacity.⁹⁵ Opacity returns and reorients both the possibility and the onus of liberation on the dominated entity.⁹⁶ These moments of defiance are to be found sometimes overtly but often at the subtextual level. Although Glissant's fluidity might tempt us into aligning him too quickly with postmodern flux and circularity, his essays and earlier novels allow for a Marxian reading that brings him quite close to Fanon's revolutionary post-Marxian ideals.⁹⁷ There can be no doubt, though, that in drawing explicit inspiration from Glissant's writing these authors have become a veritable powerhouse of magnificent literary innovation and experiment. Glissant's predilection for the boat, for the sea, for openness, for understanding and pursuing the experience of the abyss can also be seen as working through and beyond what Césaire exalted as possibility and utopian, and Fanon had yearned for in every anguished sentence and act. In place of Glissant's contingency at the moment of métissage or historical encounter, one finds Memmi returns to the already-accomplished aspect of reality.

Memmi's interest in the encounter takes different forms. As we saw, in *Strangers*, he builds on Fanon's analyses of the psychological difficulties in the space of the couple attempting to defy colonial division. It is significant that the French title of *Agar* (or Hagar from Hebrew) means 'stranger'. In the Old Testament, Genesis 16, we find that Sarah, Abraham's wife, provided her husband a second wife since she herself was barren. This foreign servant, for she was an Egyptian, was Hagar. The English title suggests a reciprocal 'strangeness' between the members of the couple, while the French is more accurate to the situation in which the protagonist brings his foreign wife home to live amongst his people. According to the biblical story, following the birth of Isaac, Hagar will be expelled along with the son she bore, Ishmael. Memmi's insistence on the form of racism will echo Fanon's obsession with the effect of the white gaze on the bodily schema of the black man. Like Fanon, Memmi will accord primary importance to lived experience as a way of understanding racism and its effects. Yet the theoretical point of difference between Memmi and Fanon is that for Memmi, in his gradual return to the affirmation of difference, such difference seems to exist as a given that may or may not then be used in racist ways. This departs from Sartre, Fanon and Glissant, for each of whom, we might say, difference itself is born of the same situation as the thought about it. Memmi remains at "the thought of the other", what Glissant calls 'moral generosity' that accepts alterity; on the other hand, the more revolutionary form of 'the other of thought', which is itself an altering

process, is less accessed by Memmi.⁹⁸ Glissant, on the other hand, will take the Caribbean as his model less in service of particular incarnations of hybridity than to understand the liberating possibilities held within the reality of unequal encounters.

Politics of encounter: transforming space/time

Glissant's recurrent play between 'here' and 'there' and his fascination with chaos in *Tout-Monde* veritably push the notion of relativity into scepticism about location.⁹⁹ Glissant's poetic drive, through various techniques, draws in outlying areas of exoticism that were constructed by European centredness and ossified through colonial exclusion and exploitation, in order to crack open that structure. This is reminiscent of the way Glissant views Faulkner's narrative of exclusion, as we have seen earlier, which for him allows the time of excluded spaces to, in the future, come together with the time of that which has been excluded. That moment is one recognized and seized by postcolonializing intellectuals. Participating in this moment, extending and redefining it, are authors not only from the francophone world, but from various parts of the recognized postcolonial world as well as of the former metropolises. The 2008 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, J-M.G. Le Clézio, draws on his ancestral colonial connection with the island of Mauritius, his travels all over the globe, and the substantial time he has spent in New Mexico.¹⁰⁰ In fact, he develops his own form of non-hierarchical relations, global connections and mythical entry into today's realities that joins up with Glissant's innovative circular detours. In Fanon's case, his task was very much implicated in the tightest moment of the colonial hierarchy and bound to it by the circumstance and timing of his death.

In developing such a poetics, Glissant's lengthy career continued to theorize the space sought by Fanon for absolute existence, which colonial culture amputated. Sartre draws attention to the deep interconnection with others that Fanon and Glissant recognize, when he focuses on the paradoxical moment of his existential narrator who looks through a keyhole unobserved. I am what I am, looking in. The moment I hear footsteps approaching, the presence of the other alerts me to my own existence and I am no longer identical with myself because of the split.¹⁰¹ Similarly Fanon describes how even from his space of objecthood, it is the other's attention which is a 'liberation', by momentarily removing him from the world.¹⁰² This beyond, to be found easily in Fanon and Glissant and often becoming a source of their obscurity, is less evident in Memmi. Glissant takes overt inspiration from Victor Segalen (1878-1919), the naval doctor, whose voyages to Tahiti and

China inspired his poetic and novelistic creation. Glissant makes space for a different meaning of exoticism in the encounter with others as Segalen inscribes it in his largely ethnographic novel *A Lapse of Memory* (1907; translation, 1995), where he takes on the ethical task of adopting the point of view of the Tahitians under the French civilizing mission.¹⁰³ In reclaiming Segalen for himself, Glissant makes it less easy to ascribe predictable positions based on belonging to particular groups that simplistic appropriations of Fanon have sometimes tended to do. Glissant's work, particularly when read alongside Fanon's, reveals the complexity of Fanon's thought and writing, as it emerges in both the specific Caribbean experience of colonialism and the more general dilemmas and positions of *évolués* under colonial culture.

With Memmi, such an *évolué* returns to Tunisia with his white French wife who problematizes the narrator's desire for Frenchness and for escaping Jewish particularity through his identity as the white woman's husband.¹⁰⁴ The precarious hierarchy between white women and native culture within colonial framing, while both troubling and complex, marginalizes women of colour even further. Solid literary production by women writers such as Assia Djebar and Maryse Condé historicizes and privileges the particularity of women in forging canonical form, even as they continue to theorize from and through the revolutionary language-space inaugurated in the encounter. In a writer like Assia Djebar (b. 1936), we find a reinvention of these questions of self and other, of violence and hybridity, of love and of war strongly present in Fanon and developed in different ways by Memmi in particular. Memmi conquers his in-between position between the native Arab and the French colonialist by movement as a *French* citizen to Paris only to be struck by a return to Jewishness that is all the more painful because it was abandoned. Djebar will exemplify, and particularly in *Fantasia* like no other writer before or since, the anguish of Fanon, the endlessness of Glissant, and the repetitive in-between ambiguity and anxiousness of Memmi.¹⁰⁵ Other Algerian women such as Leïla Sebbar, who was born to an Algerian father and French mother in 1941, raised in Algeria then settled in France, as well as the younger Malika Mokeddem, born in 1949, revolutionize the terms of representation, while fundamentalism within the country emerges strongly. But in these writers one finds equally huge inspiration from their own life experience: Malika Mokeddem's intense, poetic prose, for example draws from her deep connection to her Bedouin roots, while Djebar's complex sentences come from a deep desire for the Arabic language itself - a language from which she has been separated by her attending French school from an early age.¹⁰⁶ Djebar's use of French, while clearly part of her colonial heritage, is used to subvert both

patriarchal power as well as to go beyond 'writing back' to the colonizer. Her use of colonial archives to reimagine Algerian history is brilliant for its exploration of the autobiographical self in the narrative and linguistic task of such a historical endeavour. For her part, the Mauritian writer Ananda Devi Anenden, whose biography does not share the intense political climate of her Algerian sisters, speaks in eloquent, poetic terms through her novelistic array and forms a strong web of identification with the interconnected, transnational canon of quite particularly francophone writing.¹⁰⁷

These brief remarks cannot do justice to any of the authors mentioned in dialogue with the three authors treated here, but they are meant to establish clearly that the parameters of these core writers cannot 'explain' any aspects of particular francophone texts or their authors. Yet it is possible to establish a set of interrelations across time and nation, across gender and particularity, through which we might view the quite special but non-exclusive language-space of francophone literary creation, marked as it was by encounter and quite particularly by its articulation through Caribbean sensibility. In this way we can understand historically how Abdourahman Waberi, a young man from Djibouti (which became a republic as late as 1977), who went to study English in France, became in essence his country's first novelist and produced a text as profound and complex as *In the United States*.¹⁰⁸ Explicitly acknowledging Glissant but unconsciously reinventing Fanon, Waberi, in his satiric transposition of the world where Europe and America are miserable places whose populations flee to the majestic, powerful United States of Africa, is able to erupt into novelistic writing without following any predictable tendencies because of the robust historical presence of a core of writing that has been canonized and made a tradition to contend with, not simply alongside the 'French' canon, but really intersecting it and establishing the space itself of France's 'exotic' others.

At the same time, it is also important to remember that French imperialism was closely connected to promotion of the French language. In fact, the moment of Negritude cannot be properly understood separately from the way France continues to annex its former colonies, well after their official independence, through tools such as the *Organisation internationale de la francophonie*, which brings together the various French-speaking nations, most of which are former colonies. It goes without saying that in proposing such a moment, its reach can and should go well beyond any idea of *francophonie* in order to actualize transnationalism that can itself escape being another new heritage that colonialism had somehow prepared. Thus it is an exciting opportunity to extend this moment fittingly within these volumes by drawing

together the history of Caribbean and Arab literatures, and developments in Latin America for example. At the same time, Glissant gives us a lucid sense of how a moment of danger can perpetuate its reach: 'Every poetics is the search for the reference. The reference is only when those it concerns, without exception, are imprinted by it.'¹⁰⁹ If, as in the writers considered here, the encounter itself becomes a poetics, then it seeks out doubly (in the sense of encounter that must implicate meeting 'otherness' and in the above sense of poetics that needs a reference) the context and collectivities implicated in/ marked by such a poetics of encounter:

While writing back was seen as an effective but also as a historically limited form of resisting colonial domination, space-making itself was appropriated by postcolonial thinkers. Beginning from an early notion of transculturation, associated with Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortíz, however much it was steeped in a European anthropological model in the end, writers such as Glissant, Derek Walcott or Antonio Benítez-Rojo envisaged Caribbean space as a unity in diversity and as a constant interaction of particular and general.¹¹⁰ Edward Kamau Brathwaite's interest in the figure of the Creole also attempts to use the encounter in its Caribbean and historical specificity as well as to privilege a process of creolization that could produce a new 'wholeness'.¹¹¹ This tendency is strongly present in Fanon even though he is less identified with Caribbean space. In Fanon, it is exhibited in poetic form, through the narrative shifts identified earlier in this chapter. It is also present in the notion of global solidarity versus national particularity that characterizes *Wretched*, and in the more personal struggle between individual and collective consciousness, between reality and utopia in *Black Skin*.¹¹²

We might say, by way of conclusion, that the trauma that marked the encounter was the trauma of historical rupture and of erasure of subjectivity. The continuities we see thematically and aesthetically through the mapping of postcolonial francophone writing by encounter thus carry the history of that traumatic encounter without repeating it. The aesthetically recognizable continuities tell of a history that was never possessed, particularly in the poignancy of Caribbean reality that marked, indelibly, all of francophone writing in sensibility and timbre from its incipience. In literature, the refusal to repeat is not just a question of poetic individuality; it can be read as a historical imperative for healing. Glissant writes: 'Diversion is not a useful ploy unless it is nourished by reversion: not a return to the longing for origins, to some immutable state of Being, but a return to the point of entanglement, from which we were forcefully turned away; that is where we must ultimately put to work the forces of creolization, or perish.'¹¹³ Making detours in form,

postcolonial writing in the francophone voice resolutely returns to the point of entanglement and endlessly creolizes the literary space.

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