

Touching the Wounds of Colonial Duration:  
Fanon and a critical phenomenology of racialized affect

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Introduction

Surrounding Frantz Fanon's work is a persistent (and at times reductive) debate on method. Was Fanon a phenomenologist (Gordon 2015), though arguably one who only gleaned a superficial understanding of phenomenology (Macey 2012)? Or was his method psychoanalytic, and thus suspicious of the appearances with which phenomenology stuck (Marriott 2018)? Does Fanon owe more to Sartre (Bernasconi 2007) or to Merleau-Ponty (Weate 2001, Bentouhami-Molino 2014)? Is the afropessimist reading of Fanon reconcilable with the decolonial or the postcolonial ones, or are there different Fanons at stake (between Martinique, France, Algeria, Tunisia, Ghana)? What is often forgotten is that the originality of Fanon's philosophy comes from the multiplicity of approaches he was able to simultaneously weave together. More so, in attempts to read Fanon *through* Sartre or Merleau-Ponty, or *through* Lacan, his contemporaneity with these thinkers is elided. While we know that Fanon attended Merleau-Ponty's lectures in Lyon in the late 1940s, no one worries to ask how Merleau-Ponty could lecture in and about Madagascar in the late 1950s without referencing Fanon. In other words, it might be time to read phenomenology (especially, I argue, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty) *through Fanon*, rather than centering analysis on Fanon's assumed debt to Merleau-Ponty's body schema or his lack of familiarity with Husserl (Macey 2012, Bentouhami-Molino 2014).

In this essay, I focus on the question of phenomenological method (without assuming this to be *the* only method of Fanon's work). My argument is not one from continuity. Rather, I want to show how Fanonian phenomenology is one of rupture with, and ungrounding of, the phenomenological tradition—how Fanon creates his own

method through a phenomenology of affect and touch that breaks with the perceptual (spectacle) that appears at the centre of most phenomenologies before him. This is to say that Fanon's phenomenology is not mere description—a non-methodological or vague approximation of phenomenology that remains at the level of undeconstructed experience. Rather, I argue, Fanon *invents* a critical, distinctly temporal, phenomenological *method* from the *affective territory* in which he has had to dwell. This method is a guiding thread through his writings.

### 1. A phenomenology of racialization: Spectacle and affect

Late in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Frantz Fanon says: “we need to touch all the wounds that score the black livery [*nous avons besoin de toucher du doigt toutes les plaies qui zèbrent la livrée noire*].”<sup>1</sup> And then, citing Aimé Césaire: “for life is not a spectacle, for a sea of sorrows is not a proscenium, for a man who screams is not a dancing bear [*car la vie n'est pas un spectacle, car une mer de douleurs n'est pas un proscénium, car un homme qui crie n'est pas un ours qui danse*]. . .” (PN 181/187/164; Césaire 2017, 94) While Fanon often deflects questions of formal method (PN 12/12/xvi), to touch the wounds of racialization, to make them felt and to dwell in them, brings us closest to his phenomenological method in my view. This allows us to understand why a phenomenology of racialization is a *phenomenology of affect*, and not primarily a phenomenology of (visual) perception or the visible *à la* Maurice Merleau Ponty.<sup>2</sup> At stake is affectivity that remains beneath the level of intentional sense-giving (even as it motivates perception and emotion), more atmospheric or thalassic than object or act.<sup>3</sup> Yet this Fanonian approach also questions and reconfigures phenomenology— just as his work, in its irreducible methodological plurality, questions psychoanalysis, psychiatry, political philosophy, and ontology. The challenge is not only that of “expressing” or “inventorying the real” (PN 134/137/116; 181/187/164), when Fanon has insisted on the multiplicity of racialized and colonized experience and on the differential

positionalities within Blackness (PN 14/14/xviii), and when that “real” has been repressed through the spectacle staged in its place (Hartman 1997, 39). I argue that the difficulty for phenomenology is threefold: the risk of specularization (section 1); how racialization structures affect, calling into question immediacy (section 2); and the failure of phenomenological reductions to account for the weight of colonization (section 3).

First is what I would call the methodological trap of *specularization*—the tendency to take phenomenology to be equivalent to making experience visible. Even when the invisible workings of the flesh are revealed in their activity as well as their passivity (to use Merleau-Ponty's vocabulary), their being rendered a spectacle introduces not only the danger of “thingification”—“*chosification*” (Césaire 1955, 23)—but also the circumscription and elision of the very affectivity that I am trying to describe. For a phenomenology of racialization, this is doubly problematic, since it means converting the experiences of racialized subjects—suffering, enjoyment, reaction, redress, and resistance, even the “feeling of nonexistence” (PN 135/139/118)—into phenomena available to a racializing and surveilling gaze. More so, it exposes and spreads out the racialized body: “my body was returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, recoated, draped in mourning on that white winter's day [*Mon corps me revenait étalé, disjoint, rétamé, tout endeuillé dans ce jour blanc d'hiver*]” says Fanon (PN 111/113/93). Not only does this spatialization elide the nonlinear temporalities of racialized experience, it also distorts lived space, pulling and projecting the body onto a spatial grid wherein experience can be seen, grasped, and measured.

This repeats the logic of racialization that fixes and dissects the body (for “white gazes [*les regards blancs*]”), cuts instantaneous cross-sections of its experience, making it again the slave of an appearance (PN 32/35/18). Fanon is drawing, as he often does, on medical imagery when he says: “Ayant accommodé leur microtome, ils réalisent objectivement des coupes de ma réalité.” (PN 113/116/95) The *microtome* is an

instrument that cuts thin sections of matter for examination under a microscope. At once,

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the body is naturalized as *biological* matter, and it is subject to a *too close* look that claims scientific objectivity. The racialized body is distorted: both because it is congealed as an instantaneous section in time, and because this section is excised through cutting of living flesh, *as if it were already dead*—making it into a sample to be examined scientifically for the secrets of “un nouveau type d'homme, un nouveau genre” that Fanon may be.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, when Fanon says, “*Mon corps me revenait étalé, disjoint, rétamé, tout endeuillé dans ce jour blanc d'hiver*” (PN 111/113/93), this bodily mutilation could be heard in different registers, from the mechanistic and scientific spatialization of the body, to the poetic French of the phrase, to the inexpressible cry it might hide. Racialization re-coats and wears out the body (*rétamé* has the sense both of being replated and of fatigue).<sup>5</sup> Plunged in mourning (*endeuillé*), in Blackness and sorrow, this body returns to itself with a difference, a fold: mourning is a temporal affect of undergoing and remembering that registers a process of colonization, which has recalcitrantly rephrased, repeated, and adapted itself in a *longue durée*. The racialized body has been de-structured, torn apart, reconstituted and glued together as mechanism; it has been injected with pathogens, infected with *tetanus*, scapegoated as the bearer of the weight and guilt of its own oppression. Colonization, I argue, unfolds in different times, and colonized affectivity cannot simply be taken to mirror the coating, livery, or “white masks” that colonization projects, even when this has been internalized or epidermalized. Colonized affectivity—as with the North African's “unlocalizable pain”—remains evasive and opaque. This is not only because the stereotypes of colonial ethnopsychiatry are projected as a screen in front of it (e.g. the Arab's  *paresse*); it is also because the colonized body “*se contracte, se défend*” (RA 15/7) against the medical perceptual apparatus (vision, palpation, and auscultation) that attempts to expose its affect and fix it

in its place—a place without relationality, which has “no place” in this world (RA 19/11, 23/14).

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In this regard, two assumptions undermine phenomenological approaches to racialization, in their classical and even sometimes critical instantiations. What is at stake, first, is the assumed transparency and self-evidence of experience that is given in the immediacy of affect. Neither is affect unmediated, since colonization structures it from within, nor can it be made externally perceptible without loss. Eschewed is the density, opacity, temporality, and ambivalence of racialized affect that cannot be easily expressed in perceptual or discursive terms (because these dimensions are also overdetermined by colonization, which harnesses their affective and imaginary force). Second is the underlying assumption that the lived body is *expression*: a theory that grounds much of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and which goes back to Husserl's *Ideas II*. It worth noting that this theory of expression (however incomplete and imminent its reversibility may be) underwrites the legibility of racialized modes of life to white gazes—their perceptual availability within an intersubjective field of sense.

As Saidiya Hartman has argued—in refusing to reproduce the scene of the beating of Aunt Hester from Frederick Douglass' 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*—the routine and repeated display of the slave's pained body at once reinforces “the spectacular character of black suffering” and circumscribes and naturalizes that suffering (Hartman 1997, 3, 20).<sup>6</sup> While scenes of violence claim to give evidence of black sentience, they instrumentalize suffering and make it legible and familiar. This immures the witness to that pain, while inviting them to projectively grasp and measure it, opening it to voyeuristic repulsion and enjoyment (3-4). For Hartman, the hypervisibility of racialized bodies risks reproducing the affective economy of slavery—where the fungibility of the slave body as commodity makes it an “empty vessel,” dispossessed and vulnerable to projection and prosthesis (21). Even empathetic accounts

repeat this specularization and projective reduction (Hartman 1997, 17-19). Through the spectacle that defines their pain and puts it in its place, racialized subjectivity comes to be selectively seen as *limited sentience*—as circumscribed humanity, person and property

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(Hartman 1997, 35). In a move that uses the subjectivity and sentient embodiment of the racialized as instruments against them, the very spectacle—exposure and assumed transparency—of black affectivity becomes a tool to intensify subjection.

This risk of specularization looms large when *Peau noire, masques blancs* is read as explicating the sense, and shedding light on the constitution, of racialized and colonized suffering through the application of a predefined phenomenological method—a reading I resist here. Instead, I argue that Fanon works to interrupt—indeed “bracket”—specular and spectacular renderings of suffering and colonial violence. What he puts his finger on, and puts us in touch with, are the structuring and de-structuring times of colonization, in their quotidian and pathologizing normalcy; Fanon's memory of the child on the train saying “Tiens, un nègre!” is a terrorizing example in its repetition and everydayness (PN 109/112/91). “*Toucher du doigt*” (PN 181/187/164) means both to touch with one's finger and to put one's finger just there (on the flaring of the pain, its texture and movement, with nuance and care). But it also means to be proximate or near to, to accompany, or as I read it, to  *dwell with* those wounds. The touch that Fanon advocates is neither optimal grip, comprehensive grasp, medical examination, nor uniform pressure, nor can it be predicted in advance. His writing touches colonial wounds. By palpating these wounds and dwelling in and with them, it resuscitates colonial wounds as *feelings* that are flesh, and that we are; “the [Arab] *is* his pain,” says Fanon (RA 13/5).<sup>7</sup> It does not leave them behind as if their scar tissue was merely a numb object of the past.

## 2. Fanon and Touch

Fanon seems to reiterate here Edmund Husserl's phenomenological discovery in *Ideas II* that the hand that touches the surface of a table, as it moves across it, also feels itself touched. Husserl describes *touch-sensings* [*Empfindnisse*] given through the dynamic and fluid intertwining of kinaestheses (sensations of the movement of my own

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body) and sensations of being-touched (Husserl 1989, 146). Rather than being intentional, *sensings* are reflexive and non-objectivating, founding the lived-through sensibility of my own body—indeed, the possibility of having a *lived* body (Al-Saji 2010, 18-19). Since touch is not a compartmentalized sense, sensings happen anywhere where the body is touched. The whole body is a touch-surface, but skin also folds in on itself and flesh has felt depth (Husserl gives the example of the heart (Husserl 1998, 165)). Thus the body can also touch itself, as in Husserl's famous example of one hand touching the other (Husserl 1998, 144-5). This self-perception doubles and localizes sensings on the touching-touched skin and gives the body as a field of sensings—appearing to itself as *living body* (*Leib*) and not mere extended physical body (*Körper*).

Yet Fanon's phenomenology of touch is at once more painful and more temporally complex than Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's. Touch is, for Fanon, not a mere mundane experience. On the one hand, it is part of the corrosive action (recalcitrant and ankylosed mechanism) of the white world that (de)structures his body through a progressively more violent and stifling touch—that flicks, slaps, tears apart, dissects, and burns his body. On the other hand, touch is part of his response to that white world, his sensitivity (“*sensitif*”), his contraction, spread, crawling (“reptation”)—felt through the antennae he develops and the pseudopodia he puts out—touching the wounds of colonialism with a different orientation, a hesitation, and a non-presentist localization. Whenever touch is evoked in Fanon's work, I think it both has the role of accompanying, phenomenologically and vigilantly, the unfolding of the painful touch of racialization (“*toucher du doigt*” as dwelling with) and touch can become an anticolonial therapeutic

means to “conscienciser” the racialized patient (PN 97/100/80) (“toucher du doigt” as putting one's finger on, localizing the source).

Here, Fanon has the aim “de le mettre [le Noir] en mesure de *choisir* l'action (ou la passivité) à l'égard de la véritable source conflictuelle—c'est-à-dire à l'égard des structures sociales” (PN 97–8/100/80) In this vein, the structure of touch-sensings as, at

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once, activity and passivity allows the affective ambivalence of racialization to be dwelled in without necessarily being accepted—permits us to become conscious of “une possibilité d'exister,” other than what colonialism projects for us (PN 97/100/80). Touch sensing is not simply that which founds our experience of our living body, once a phenomenological reduction is applied (a reduction to mineness, or of the world-out-there as in Husserl). Touch is part of Fanon's reconfiguration of phenomenological method; to do this, it must be a different kind of touch. (In what follows, I trace this touch through *Peau noire, masques blancs* and “Le 'syndrome nord-africain’”. I believe this opens up different readings of Fanon, that permit us to feel what existing in the “zone of non being” may be, despite the breakdown of a body schema and in excess of this privation. Specifically, I believe it allows us to disentangle Fanon from the starting point many critical phenomenologists assume for him, that of Merleau-Ponty's body schema.)

### 2.1 To be Touched by Colonization

Fanon's method of touch differs from Husserl's phenomenology of touch in at least three ways. First, that upon which Fanon's method touches has already been touched and wounded by colonial violence, recursively in a *longue durée*. This past and ongoing colonial (de)structuration cannot be bracketted to focus on a domestic scene of innocuous touch, as Husserl does. There is no flesh that has not been touched, reconfigured, through *colonial duration*—through what Fanon calls the “absolute wound” of colonization (PN 94/97/77). In coining the term “colonial duration” (a reworking of Bergsonian *durée*), I



mean to emphasize how the colonial past is not a linear continuum of events, but retains, in its texture and sense, the trace of its own temporal becoming. To speak of *duration* is to acknowledge the difference that the weight (and affective snowballing) of time makes for experience.<sup>8</sup> For the colonized, the very sensibility of flesh registers the weight of this duration—as memory immanently woven into its texture—and responds to the instituted violence of the colonial world. Colonized flesh is “susceptible” (PN 114/116/96), Fanon notes, “sensitive” (PN 117/120/99)—hypersensible

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and prickly. Significantly, the phenomenon of touch is no longer a matter of hands touching each other (Husserl), or of a body schema focused on a manual task where “only [the] hands are accentuated and [the] whole body trails behind them like a comet's tail” (Merleau-Ponty, PhP 129/102). This sensitivity extends all over the body, through skin and folds; it remains and endures in multidimensional affects that ebb and flow within Fanon's writing (so that the writing, like the tongue of the Martiniquan or the belly of the Arab, is sensitive and refuses to be pinned down).

Colonial wounds—colonial duration—endure, fester, and become infected, in differential ways for the colonial society (e.g. metropolitan France) and for the colonized (Martinique, Madagascar, Algeria). Fanon is clear that colonialism and racism produce pathologies in both colonizer and colonized (this is reiterated in RA, EAL, and DT); both undergo *affective aberrations* but in importantly different ways (PN 8/8/xii). Following Césaire (as Fanon does in *PN* chapter 4), we can conceive colonialism as rot and gangrene that empty out colonial society of its vital substance (1955, 12), so that it eats up other cultures, exploits them as material fertilizer for its wealth, and projects onto them the guilt of that same rot. This affective projection is also an affective emptiness or null of colonial society—an *ankylosis* that refuses to feel the suffering it has brought/is bringing about. We might say (with Husserl and against Merleau-Ponty) that it is a touching that refuses to feel itself touched; such disregard or “active ignorance” sustains

colonialism (Ann Stoler calls this “colonial aphasia”).<sup>9</sup> The colonized, on the other hand, are “infected with extremely toxic foreign bodies” (PN 33/36/19); they are “tetanized”; they spasm and contract; they are mechanically beaten up and torn apart, without reciprocity. But they do not merely undergo these processes; they *feel* (*sensings*), even when the sources are not localized. (Colonial duration thus intertwines different times.)

I think it would be a mistake to read Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* as a (linear) narrative of colonized and racialized suffering; Fanon knows too well the dangers of rendering Black bodies, Malagasy bodies, Algerian bodies as spectacle. But his work

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enacts the modes by which these bodies (which are “not quite bodies” (RA 17/9)) are touched by the colonial white world, and the multiple registers in which they feel this touch (touch-sensings that go beyond Husserl) and in which they react, respond, or resist it. I do not mean to underemphasize the role of vision in racialization. But going against some of my own earlier work, I want to uncover what is elided when we focus on the objectifying work of vision in racialization and assume that the affectivity of those who are racialized simply *mirrors* or interiorizes this objectification. “White gazes” touch, dissect, and fix the racialized—“dans le sens où l'on fixe une préparation par un colorant” (PN 107/109/89). And it is by attending to these (bio)chemical, mechanical, and transsubstantiating processes that the felt dimensions of *becoming-racialized*—its affective afterlives and “death[s] on this side of death” (RA 21/13)—come to focus (though not to transparency). To emphasize touch is not to elide the economic, historical, and sociogenic forces at work, and which Fanon marks as the other side of phenomenology (“deux plans,” PN 11/11/xv). Rather, it is to render their working-over of flesh concrete [does Fanon meet Hortense Spillers' “hieroglyphics of the flesh” here?]. So that “après avoir décrit le réel, il se propose de le changer” (PN 163/168/146).

I want to propose that, if there is a schema from which Fanon begins, it is not Merleau-Ponty's lived body schema (PhP 127-132/100-105), which is referenced first in

chapter five of *Peau noire, masques blancs* (“The lived experience of the black [L’expérience vécue du Noir]”). We could call that Merleau-Pontian body schema “utopian” from the racialized perspective; more precisely, I would argue that it is a way of coordinating sensings *according to* the practical possibilities of white life, a postural schema that requires the exclusion of Black life.<sup>10</sup> Rather, it is the *historico-racial schema* that has *weight* for Fanon: “Une lourdeur inaccoutumée nous oppressa. Le véritable monde [blanc] nous disputait notre part. [An unfamiliar weight oppressed me. The real world challenged my claims.]”<sup>11</sup> (PN 108/110/90) Significantly, this is not (yet) a *body* schema; it is rather a schematization or mapping of the world with “two systems

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of reference” (PN 108/110/90)—wherein Fanon has no place in the civilizational white world and is relegated to its underbelly, a world of stereotypes and scarecrows (like the Arab patient in RA 23/14). These two systems are sedimented over a long colonial duration; but neither one represents the pre-colonial world, which has been de-structured on Fanon's account.

With the remanents of this colonial duration, “l'autre, le Blanc, [...] m'avait tissé de mille détails, anecdotes, récits [the other, the white, [...] had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories]” (PN 109/111/91); not only stereotypes, but films, comic books, school curricula, white looks, and others' comportments towards me—absent and emptied of reciprocity (110/112/92). These take the place of the residues of tactile, vestibular, kinaesthetic and visual sensations (citing L'hermitte) that Fanon imagines his body schema could have been, but isn't. That imaginary body schema crumbles, once these stereotypes become *felt* through the encounter with the white world (PN 110/112/92). Instead, Fanon *feels* touched by the world, *woven* from the threads of its colonial duration, localized and put in his place; this is a triple place (too much: three places on the train) and *no place* (since none of these places are a null-point, a “here,” from which he can intend a “there”): “Je ne découvrais point de coordonnées fébriles du

monde.” (PN 110/112/92) And it is these sensings that become lived as *my skin*, what Fanon calls the *racial-epidermal schema*.<sup>12</sup> It is at this juncture that the racialized *body* emerges as a spread of sensings that I must assume reflexively:

J'étais tout à la fois responsable de mon corps, responsable de ma race, de mes ancêtres. Je promenai sur moi un regard objectif, découvris ma noiceur, mes caractères ethniques – et me défoncèrent le tympan l'anthropophagie, l'arriération mentale, le fétichisme, les tares raciales, les négriers, et surtout, et surtout: “Y'a bon banania.” [I was responsible, at once, for my body, my race, my ancestors. I took an objective look at myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics—my eardrums were bursting with cannibalism, mental retardation, fetishism, racial taints, slave-traders, and above all, above all ‘Y a bon banania’].

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Here, we have a touch of the world that pierces my eardrums so that auditory

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sensations (including the “petit nègre” of “Y a bon banania”) become localized sensings in/as my ears through the pain they produce. I want to pause here, since the mix of mechanical, biological, medical, and biochemical imagery is distinctive of Fanon's writing. But it should be remarked that the colonial construction of the historico-racial schema has a mechanical component, *weaving*, that despite its apparent coherence with links and intervals, pulls in different directions and has affective tendencies that *tear* apart (but can also be embedded with new links and intervals). It weaves a Black *livery* for Fanon that is scored with colonial wounds (not just those of his individuated existence) and which it is the aim of his method to touch. [To recall the citation from section 1: “we need to touch all the wounds that score the black livery [*nous avons besoin de toucher du doigt toutes les plaies qui zèbrent la livrée noire*].” (PN 181/187/164)]

Thus, the touch of the white world produces “un décollement, un arrachement, une hémorragie qui caillait du sang noir sur tout mon corps [peeling, tearing, hemorrhage that congealed black blood all over my body]” (PN 110/112/92). Yet we should not simply read the sensings that constitute the Black body as given, oppositionally, by the white world, even when they seem mechanically produced; they are generated reactionally as responses by the racialized subject. Hence, *mourning* (“endeuillé” as we

saw in section 1) is an affective interval, a reflexive fold, in the spread-out and disjointed field of sensings that becomes the Black body. Weariness and exhaustion (“rétamé”) register the replating, the repetitive reconstitution of its livery. *These affects hold a duration that interjects a difference into that field of sensings.* In this vein, we can understand Fanon's trembling in response to the coldness, the indifference, of the white world (which “tords les os [twists the bones]” PN 111/113/93). And the white world that surrounds him and walls him in (115/117/97) becomes a touch that burns: “Toute cette blancheur qui me calcine [all this whiteness that burns me].” (PN 111/114/94) What began with a flick (“chiquenaudait” PN 109/112/91), becomes a slap in the face (“gifle en

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plein visage” 112/114/94), surrounds and burns him all over. There are multiple modes of touch here in the amplifying violence that leaves no place for the Black body in a white world. But there is also Fanon's refusal...

In his 1952 essay on “The 'North African Syndrome,’” Fanon vividly represents this racializing mechanical touch of stereotypes and absent others as *scarecrows* (“épouvantails”):

Comment, des hommes vont et viennent le long d'un couloir que tu as construit pour eux, où tu n'as ménagé aucun banc où ils puissent se reposer, où tu as cristallisé un tas d'épouvantails qui leur giflent rageusement le visage, où ils se blessent la face, la poitrine, le cœur. Où ils ne trouvent pas de place; où tu ne leur fais pas de place; où il n'y a absolument pas place pour eux. (RA 23/14)

[Men come and go along a corridor you have built for them, where you have provided no bench on which they can rest, where you have crystallized scarecrows that viciously slap them in the face, and hurt their cheeks, their chests, their hearts. Where they find no place; where you leave them no place; where there is absolutely no place for them.] [Cont. “Mohammed” (RA 23/14)]

From the same root as “épouvante (terror),” what this world of scarecrows generates is a doubled body, not quite body, but beside itself with terror.<sup>14</sup> This terror is not so much expressed by the body, however, as refused and resisted: “le ventre se contracte, se défend,” says Fanon (RA 15/7). More so, the facial spasms and stares of the North

African fail to *express* his pain, giving only a vague impression of unlocalizable and “irreal” pain (RA 14/6). So much so that the North African's inner tension is compared by clinicians to that of a stone [“pierre”] (RA 21/12).

While sensing is generally theorized by Merleau-Ponty as a vibration or resonance of body with world at the prereflective level of sensory life (he sometimes calls this “communion”). It is worth noting that in a side note on sensing (in “le sentir” in *Phénoménologie de la perception*), he cites Werner as follows: “If a subject attempts to experience a determinate color, such as blue, while seeking to adopt with his body an attitude that works for red, an inner battle ensues, a sort of spasm, which ceases as soon as he adopts the bodily attitude that corresponds to blue.” (PhP 259/222) A sensing that

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refuses the sensed—a way of feeling-touched that refuses, not so much to be touched, but a particular *mode* of touch—*spasms*. And such muscular spasms move listlessly throughout Fanon's texts, and provide a peculiar temporality of the colonized, their  *paresse* or stagnation, their moving in place (best expressed by the French “piétiner”). Dariek Scott and Fred Moten have found in these muscular spasms of the colonized the potential for liberatory movement. While I agree that they provide this possibility, I want to linger, a bit longer, with these spasms and the refusal of the colonized to move on. I would like to think of these spasms as a way of *dwelling with* the wounds of colonization—in their duration and material memory. I think of this as the concrete form of sensitivity that Fanon develops: “Quant à moi, je saurais bien comment réagir. Et en un sens, si j'avais à me définir, je dirais que j'attends; j'interroge les alentours, j'interprète tout à partir de mes découvertes, je suis devenu sensitif. [For my part, I would know how to react [...] if I had to define myself, I would say that I wait; I interrogate the surroundings, I interpret everything in terms of what I discover, I become sensitive.]” (PN 117/120/99) This is a mode of *waiting* wherein affectivity cannot be equated with immediacy. Yet, as I argue in the rest of this essay, the presumptive “openness,” with which Fanon seems to

define waiting at the outset, falters and closes in on itself by the end of chapter five.

## 2.2 Touch, affective memory, and a “burning past”

Second, that which Fanon's method touches feels itself touched not only in the present but also in its wounded and wounding past, remembering and reliving the wounding, in a mode of affect-memory (which is more than recollection). This past weaves through Fanon's nonlinear phenomenological account. It can be felt in the affects of punishments from *Le Code Noir* that flare up, spasmodically, within the present: “I tried to escape without being seen, but the Whites fell on me and hamstringed me on the left leg [*J'avais essayé de m'évader par la bande, mais les Blancs m'étaient tombés dessus et m'avaient coupé le jarret gauche*]” (PN 126/130/109), says Fanon, living

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through the punishment for a fugitive slave who has tried to escape a second time.<sup>15</sup> Such memories are like “tattered rags” (APS 184), to use a term from Husserl, discontinuous rememberings that swell and splinter the present, that leapfrog across time.<sup>16</sup> [Fanon touches this “dead past” through a differential temporal localization that jumps between tenses, in chapter five, interweaving the *passé simple* to create a time of pastness that coexists with and is distanced from the present.]<sup>17</sup> The immediacy of affect, assumed in the Husserlian picture of touching-touched, is interrupted and deferred. Fanon makes us feel the colonial glue (past and present) that mediates sensing and structures the auto affective interval between touching and touched.

So much so that, rather than discovering one's own *living* body (*Leib*) through self-touch, as Husserl does, what Fanon often encounters is a *carcass*—the living death of the enslaved (Hartman 1997, 106), the “death on this side of death” of the North African,<sup>18</sup> the famished body-as-fodder of the colonized, their hollowed-out stereotypes—that touch needs to warm back to feeling, if not to life (PN 9/9/xiii).<sup>19</sup> There is a temporal interval and unpredictability between touching and a wound coming back to feeling. Phenomenological touch finds its tonality and texture—its burning sensitivity and

trembling hesitation—in the wound and the colonial duration that it holds; but this needs preparation and waiting. (Fanon speaks of "reptation," slowness, and waiting.) Moreover, the interval is overloaded with foreboding, stifling and taut (PN 136/140/119); and much of our "sensitivity" as colonized subjects is oriented to protecting against reliving colonial violence—shuddering and contracting so as to avoid its touch (PN 114/117/97). We could say, along with Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, that this memory "is not a story to pass on."<sup>20</sup>

In his 1952 essay on "The 'North African Syndrome,'" Fanon describes this as a "burning past [*passé cuisant*]"; it is a past that Maghribans living in France—as displaced migrant workers under conditions of colonial racism and exploitation—do not wish to relive even for the purposes of a medical diagnostic of the chronic and diffuse pain ("pain

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without lesion") from which they suffer (RA 12/4). In his essay, Fanon presents a number of different modalities of touch and it becomes clear that not every touch takes its gesture from, and shapes itself to, the pain of the patient. [Colonial structuring of medical touch] The French-trained clinician that Fanon is at this time describes this failure: "I am called in to visit a patient on an emergency. [The young doctor] 'objectively' examines the belly that has every appearance of requiring surgery [...] He touches, he palpates, he taps, he questions, but he gets only groans by way of a response. He palpates again, taps a second time, and the belly contracts, resists ... He 'sees nothing.'"<sup>21</sup> The desire to find a lesion behind the symptom, and the inability to *localize* the object of the pain—to make the pain follow an intentionality (pain is a pain of something)—leads the North African's pain to be discounted as "inconsistent, unreal" (RA 14/6, my translation). The North African is treated as an "indocile and undisciplined patient": "tout Arabe est un malade imaginaire"—fitting into the stereotype of Arab "paresse" and dissimulation (RA 15–16/7–8). [Clinician's past is ankylosed] Compare this to how a patient touches his pain: "He takes it, touches it with his ten fingers, develops it, exposes it. It grows as one watches it. He gathers it over the whole surface of his body and after fifteen minutes of



gestured explanations [with facial spasms] the interpreter [...] translates for us: he says he has a belly-ache.” (RA 13–14/5–6)

All the Arab's volubility is translated into a “vague pain” on medical terms. His effort to narrate his pain, to express it to the clinician, reveals not the pain itself, but its opacity and resistance. While it remains an open question in Fanon's essay what kind of touch could do justice to this chronic pain, the reduction by Western diagnostic methods that treats the body as a sum of organs, each with its pathology, and attempts to locate the cause of pain in a physical lesion belonging to an organ, fails to listen to the diffuse opacity and terror of the pain. For the wounding belongs to a colonial duration that burns. Beyond the present symptom, to touch the pain is to touch the “dead weight of all his compatriots” who the North African carries with him (RA 17/8). The “vagueness” means

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that the pain permeates the body, contracts and expands the limits of bodily affectivity. It reflects not a world of correlations but a world that rejects me, where I have no place, no “here,” a perpetual homelessness or statelessness. Unlocalizable pain is the other side of one's lack of place in the world: the body as lost, as wound. [Note: Fanon/the young doctor's failure and his later practice at Blida.]

### 2.3 Touch and dwelling

Third, rather than moving away or moving on, Fanon's “*toucher du doigt*” advocates other modes of waiting and dwelling in the interval, and with colonial wounds, without inscribing a teleology of healing or hope.<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Fanon describes this as descent into “le grand trou noir” (PN 14/14/xviii and PN 189-90/195/172; citing Césaire 2017, 148)—“[une] descente aux véritables Enfers,” into “une zone de non-être [...] une rampe essentiellement dépouillée” which is racialized experience (PN 8/8/xii). Though coming several years later, and after his experience in the Psychiatric hospital of Blida-Joinville in Algeria, what Fanon says of hope in his resignation letter, “Lettre au ministre résident,” is telling: “L'espoir n'est plus [...] la porte

ouverte sur l'avenir," but rather "persévération morbide." (EAL 387)

But while the tactile is affective for Fanon as it was for Husserl in *Ideas II*, it is not a continuous movement that has, as its other side, sensations coherently representing the world in a linear flow of time (e.g. the surface of Husserl's table or the soft, smooth skin of his left hand). Fanon's method stops<sup>23</sup> at times, in weariness, and dwells—but this dwelling is a mode of walking in place that shifts, in nonlinear gears, through different temporal dimensions of experience. Here touch can take the form of interruptive transport and nostalgic re-memory of foreclosed possibilities; touch can be angry, despairing, burning, zealous, tired, caring and hesitant.<sup>24</sup>

If Fanon escapes the trap of specularization, then it is by inventing a different phenomenology. Rather than applying a “neutral” phenomenological method to racialized bodies, this *critical* and *anticolonial phenomenology of affect* takes its point of departure

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within experiences of racialization, in their colonial durations, creating concepts as responses to their calls. I would argue that Fanon's metaphors are precisely that, *transport*, that move us, at once, between conceptual, literal, and affective planes, shifting between present and past in nonlinear zigzags; they are what I would call *affective concepts*. It is worth attending to Fanon's language, especially given his view that language *transsubstantiates* its speakers, mutating their biochemistry, bodily bearing, and physiology (PN 20/22/6).<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, Fanon's phenomenology folds in, and holds together, affects of racialization in a temporal palimpsest that plunges us into differential temporal rhythms and tendencies of colonization, without giving us a position from which to survey them: “tactilement et affectivement.”<sup>26</sup> As “sociodiagnostic” (PN 11/11/xv), this phenomenology is not mere description, it gives us tools for feeling and thinking otherwise. For by making us feel social structures, it makes possible other ways of

existing, thinking, and changing them (PN 97/100/80).<sup>27</sup>

### 3. The Affective Weight of Colonization

While *Peau noire, masques blancs* can be read as a phenomenology of colonized experience (Antillian, Malagasy, Arab, African), once we attend to how colonization works, it becomes clear that there is no dimension of “modern” life, no region of being, that is left untouched by it. Colonization cannot be compartmentalized or reserved to the “colonies,” nor can it be circumscribed as a layer added to societies being colonized, a supplement that leaves the rest intact. In arguing that French colonization of Madagascar provoked “an absolute wound [*une blessure absolue*]”—that Madagascar “underwent destructuration [*connut une destructuration*]” (PN 94/97/77)—Fanon's argument has ontological repercussions/dimensions. Fanon says:

Les réactions, les comportements qui sont nés de l'arrivée européenne à Madagascar ne sont pas venus s'additionner aux préexistants. Il n'y a pas eu

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augmentation du block psychique antérieur. Si par exemple des Martiens se mettaient en quête de coloniser les Terriens, non pas de les initier à la culture martienne, mais littéralement de les *coloniser*, nous douterions de la pérennité d'une quelconque personnalité. (PN 92/95/75)

[The reactions, the behaviours to which the arrival of the Europeans in Madagascar gave rise were not tacked onto a preexisting set. There was no augmentation of the previous psychic mass. If, for instance, Martians undertook to colonize earthlings, not to initiate them into Martian culture, but literally to *colonize* them, we would doubt that such a personality could survive.]

Fanon's aim is not simply to calculate the destructive effects of colonization, against arguments for its partial “civilizing” benefits, or the “need” of the colonized to be paternalistically guided.<sup>28</sup> Rather, Fanon insists that there is colonization *of being*—destructuration, corrosion, and rot on multiple levels and through differential temporalities—which is why *Les damnés de la terre* aims to decolonize being (Fanon 2002, 40). Indeed, this is not only an “existential deviation” (PN 14/14/xviii) on the individual level, which transmutes both the body schema and its emotional and physiological reactions (PN 17/19/3); it is also a structural transformation of the social,

economic, and political sphere. More precisely, we can understand the corrosiveness of colonization to be at work within the individual and the social, in literal, imaginary, and metaphorical senses inseparably.

Of the civilizing colonial mission, Fanon notes: “It is utopian to expect the black man or the Arab to exert the effort of embedding abstract values in their *Weltanschauung* when they have barely enough food to survive. [Il est utopique d'attendre du nègre ou de l'Arabe qu'ils accomplissent l'effort d'insérer des valeurs abstraites dans leur *Weltanschauung* alors qu'ils mangent à peine à leur faim.]” (PN 92-3/95/75) Because, he adds, they “lack the possibility [n'en ont pas la possibilité]” (PN 93/95/75). Here material, embodied conditions and foreclosed possibilities, eating and thinking, are held together in the affect of hunger. The overall point is that hunger is an obstacle to conceptual creation. But Fanon is also making the more subtle point that colonization wants to block imagination and invention, and uses all material and affective means to do

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so, including turning the bodies of the colonized into instruments against them and into material resources to be exploited—kept barely alive while being digested, “walking manure [*un fumier ambulant*]” he says citing Césaire (PN 95/98/78; Césaire 2017, 114). The affect of colonized hunger calls for more than nutrition; it calls for inventing sociality and ways of living and dying, on one's own terms, from the reconfigured ruin of foreclosed and dead possibilities.<sup>29</sup>

It is worth emphasizing that there is no affect that escapes the violence of colonization. Both colonial and colonized bodies undergo “aberrations of affect” (PN 8/6/xii)—“become abnormal [*s'anormalisera*]” (PN 141/143/122)—condemned to nonrelationality and the repeated failure of intersubjective reciprocity, if sought along a white-black axis. It is through such aberrant affect, I argue, that colonialism and racism expose the limits of the phenomenological reduction (in its Husserlian and even Merleau Pontian formulations). Neither can colonization be bracketted to reveal a core of sense, as

if racism were an afterthought; nor can it be put out of play to conceive a universalizable subject free of historical violence. Critical phenomenology cannot stay at the level of constitution of sense, for colonization already structures the phenomenological field of sense and draws the borders that differentiate sense from nonsense.<sup>30</sup> In *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, Husserl points to affection as a level that precedes the constitution of objects, where passivity is on the verge of turning into activity. Affection can be understood from two sides: as the “pull” of the world on my body, or my body “turning toward” that which is affecting it (Husserl 2001, 151). The perceptual field has an “affective relief” that differentially motivates meaning-making: what is noticed, what comes to matter, from that which stays in the background (unconscious “tendencies toward affection” (2001, 149)). But affective relief is shaped by diachronic and synchronic contrast, that shifts contextually and with the direction of bodily desire and sensibility (2001, 150). More deeply than Husserl’s method admits, however, how *contrast* comes to be felt (and by whom) is a function of

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the colonial duration that structures the phenomenological field.

While Husserl’s account allows for differentially mapped affective reliefs, it insists on the leeway that consciousness feels in relation to the affective pull of “objects”—without which the free practice of phenomenological bracketing would not be possible. Merleau-Ponty’s description of the phenomenological reduction as “loosen[ing] the intentional threads that connect us to the world in order to make them appear” (2012[1945], 14), relies implicitly on a concept of “scope of life.” Such “scope of life” allows the subject to step back and distance itself from, or rupture its familiarity with, the world—and, following Eugene Minkowski, allows “leeway [*Spielraum*]” and room to breathe (2012[1945], 338). While Fanon may agree on “the impossibility of a complete reduction” for reasons different than Merleau-Ponty’s (Merleau-Ponty 2012[1945], 14), he may wonder at the familiarity and comfort of a world, in which such

spatiotemporal leeway is norm, and from which Merleau-Ponty begins.

If we put affect back in its place and time, as Fanon asks (PN 101-2/104/84), we experience a world that stifles and weighs on racialized bodies—bogs them down, “*engluer*” (PN 32/35/18)—without a feeling of leeway. Here, the phenomenological reduction as *suspension* of theoretical and natural attitudes, as putting out of play the object-in-itself and the particularity and habituality of the ego, is not only incomplete, but fails to begin or be motivated.<sup>31</sup> Thus we encounter split modes of affectivity, in which colonization operates with differential temporal weight and is embodied differently: while colonial affectivity is “ankylosed” and insensitive, colonized subjects are hypersensitive and risk being “tetanised.” But this is not merely a subjective difference; we live split worlds, with starkly different affective relief.

It is from a different affective territory that the project of phenomenological reduction becomes imaginable: one that compartmentalizes racism to a surface layer of existence, where colonization can be treated with indifference. Here, colonization can be held at an “optimal distance,” treated as an *object* of study, through free and imaginative

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variation—without needing to feel how it permeates the atmosphere, sustains the phenomenologist's body, and makes the freedom of distantiation possible for him. Fanon calls this “affective ankylosis [*ankylose affective*],” one of the more puzzling socio-diagnostic neologisms he invents (PN 119/122/101). *Ankylosis* should be read in medical, anatomical, and metaphorical senses at once; it describes a condition where joints become fused and coalesce, so that articulations are restricted and movement is no longer possible between them. Fanon associates *affective ankylosis* with an inability to make the past fluid,<sup>32</sup> to reconfigure, rearticulate, or feel that past differently. What is ankylosed is colonial affectivity—a “white” world that excludes and dominates racialized subjects through gluey formations of time. This is not simply a question of fixity; as an organic pathology, ankylosis diagnoses a past that coalesces and adheres, repeatedly over time,

but that may also numb and gangrene.<sup>33</sup> This temporal schema highlights both the *recalcitrance* and *disregard* that structure colonial affectivity. (And it can be contrasted to the *sensitivity* of colonized affect, described earlier.)

Racialization is a peculiar form of *othering* that cultivates, as its infrastructure, forgetting and disregard of the “others” who are its objects. Racism is affectively ambivalent. Its recalcitrance, Fanon shows, relies on adapting to its social time and place, taking on the guise of prevailing norms (2006, 40). But racism also covers over this rephrasing; it represses the histories and operations of power, which constitute it, and blames its victims (PN 188/194/170). Disavowed is the very *guilt* and corrosive de structuring that colonization brings about—projected onto its *colonized others*.<sup>34</sup> Racialized bodies are, at once, the material and affective labour, the disposable lives that colonization exploits—the “fertilizer” that nourishes colonialism, says Fanon (PN 209/216/190)—and they are the scapegoats upon which the need for colonization and its constitutive violence are projected. Thus, racialization has more to do with drawing lines of domination—policing the borders of “whiteness” and Eurocentric modernity—than with the concrete racialized and colonized lives who are its ostensible objects and which

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it actively misrepresents. More than “active ignorance” (Medina 2013, 39, 57), I argue that key to understanding the recalcitrance of racism is affective, *colonial disregard*.<sup>35</sup> Colonial duration weighs lightly on colonial citizens and heavily on colonized subjects, a differential weighting that translates temporal and spatial leeway. By calibrating the affective relief of the perceptual field, racism already operates at the level of passivity and habituality (for which we remain responsible). It motivates and circumscribes the ways in which contrast is felt in the phenomenological field, what makes sense and what remains nonsense. That which colonized bodies feel most sensitively and acutely, that toward which they turn, often cannot find a way to register its weight within the ankylosed affective field of colonialism (for colonial citizens). In this way, colonized

affect and agency are flattened; appearing not only unreasoned but temporally unmotivated, *they do not matter* (and are only recognized within the stereotypical terms that colonization sets out in advance).

Phenomenology is symptomatic of this differential weighting. Fanon's socio diagnostic shows how phenomenology needs to redress and decolonize social structures, to be world transformation, in order to create the leeway to reflect. It cannot assume a transparent, unobstructed interval. Racialized subjects are stuck in a colonial past that makes them perpetually *late* (PN 118/121/100), so that their meaning-making lacks traction.<sup>36</sup> With a past impossible to bracket, a future sheared off, the interval in which colonized subjects live is affectively overloaded, sensitive, and "tetanised." Fanon diagnoses "affective tetanisation" as the useless spasming of the muscles of the colonized.<sup>37</sup> If colonization is *tetanus*, then it is an infection that penetrates colonized bodies through colonial wounds; it leads to spasms that may look externally like paralysis but that hide, in their depth, intense activity and (appropriate) sensitivity to the violence of the colonial world.

I have argued that Fanon invents a phenomenology from dwelling in this affective interval, from touching the wounds of colonial duration that constitute it.

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<sup>1</sup> Fanon 1952, 181; Fanon 1967, 187; Fanon 2008, 164. Cited as PN with French pagination, followed by both English translations (1967 then 2008). I cite primarily the French text, since each translation needs correction, while retaining distinctive virtues.

<sup>2</sup> While I won't have space to expand on this contrast, Fanon's phenomenology should be read as an alternative to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's primacy of perception, and not as an extension or continuation of it.

<sup>3</sup> This distinction between affect and emotion relies on Husserl 2001; it is more ambiguous for Merleau-Ponty 2012[1945]. Emotion "proper" is intentional turning toward an object, while affect includes the preintentional tendencies or drives that ground this. I read Fanon's as a phenomenology of prereflective affect that often remains non-objectivating and is felt as atmosphere, bog, glue, and in sensings of touch, burning, hunger, and tetanisation.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the biological sense, the racializing cuts of the body are almost photographic in their instantaneity, recalling the use of photography as prosthetic of racialization: exoticised images of Algerian women that were sent home by French colonial troops, violent images of lynching and the crowds' enjoyment of it, posed images of a native family or village transplanted to Paris for the 1900 world fair. We should also hear in Fanon's evocation of dissection, the cells and tissues of racialized bodies, and in particular Black bodies, that are stored and used for medical experimentation (see the case of Henrietta Lacks).

<sup>5</sup> "Rétamé" recalls the white masks in Fanon's title, the "livery [livrée]" that the black body is made to wear (PN 111/ 114/94, 181/187/164), and the whiteness that burns him: "Toute cette blancheur qui me calcine. . ." (PN 111/114/94).

<sup>6</sup> For a genealogy of discussions of this scene, that takes into account sexualization, see Weheliye 2014, 91-94. <sup>7</sup> We do not simply have and exchange affects as possessions, we are those moving affective landscapes.

<sup>8</sup> Colonial duration is a term I have coined (appropriating and going beyond Bergsonian *durée*). See Al-Saji 2018. For an approach that is consonant with mine and that brings together phenomenology and afro-pessimism, see Slaby 2019.

<sup>9</sup> See Charles Mills, José Medina, and Ann Laura Stoler.

<sup>10</sup> Fanon makes this claim in PN 157/161/139 with respect to Negrophobia: “nous dirons que le nègre par son corps gêne la fermeture du schéma postural du Blanc.”

<sup>11</sup> “[L]e poids de cette malédiction corporelle” (PN 109/111/91).

<sup>12</sup> For more on skin and its importance in Fanon's PN and DT, see William Paris's productive working through of *peau*, *dépouillement*, and *peau neuve* in “The Skin of the World: A brief exploration of Fanon's erotic humanism” (on the Discrimination and Disadvantage blog at: [philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability\\_and\\_disadvantage](http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability_and_disadvantage)).

<sup>13</sup> PN 110/112/92 (I've revised the translation using Macey 2012, 164). The French phrase “Y a bon banania,” which Fanon employs, is difficult to translate. It recalls to the French reader a well-known brand of cocoa drink mix that uses in its advertising and on its tin the caricature of a grinning black man (supposed to represent a Senegalese *tirailleur*, a colonial infantry soldier). But it also replaces the “correct” French of “c'est bon” with “y a bon”—amplifying the racialization of the Senegalese soldier by making him speak “petit-nègre,” glueing visible, audible, and linguistic dimensions.

<sup>14</sup> “Ce corps qui n'est pas tout à fait corps ou du moins qui est doublement corps puisque ahuri d'épouvante” (RA 17/9).

<sup>15</sup> Le Code Noir, article 38: “L'esclave fugitif [...] aura les oreilles coupées et sera marqué d'un fleur de lys sur une épaule; s'il récidive un autre mois à compter pareillement du jour de la dénonciation, il aura le jarret coupé, et il sera marqué d'une fleur de lys sur l'autre épaule [...]” See also PN 223/230/204 and 209/216/190.

<sup>16</sup> Affective relief may not be as continuous as we imagine, when we focus only on the impressional present. Rather awakenings, that give rise to rememberings radiate back discontinuously and “in leaps” (APS 183). Husserl says: “[E]very awakening radiating back is naturally discontinuous [...] The awakening can jump from one sedimented layer to another, which can be now higher, now deeper; it can jump in leaps and without any determinate order. In this way, manifold possibilities develop for rememberings that follow upon one another and that are entirely and immediately disjointed. Each one is characterized as a beginning expanse of streaming re constitution, but one that is sinking once more into powerlessness. All these rememberings are nevertheless referred back to the continuously integrally cohesive system of sediments existing in concealment—a coherent nexus that would however only be reproductively realized if we would continuously reproduce, if we could continuously reproduce our entire life from the very beginning and in one stroke.” (APS 183–184) More importantly: “The emergence of rememberings yields a peculiar enrichment of that living, originally constituting present that we conceived heretofore in a necessary abstraction, purely as a process of immanent hyletic experience—of original experience. Now joining the particular intuitions of this living experience, which are connected in thoroughgoing internal continuity, that is, particular intuitions that cannot be isolated at all, are rememberings like tattered rags, rememberings arising from an entire previous experience that is reanimated. United in a certain way with the current present through association, they do not have any direct experiential connection with it, they arise in a narrow sense, disjointed. Different rememberings are also without an internal coherence between each other, where they emerge in leaps through discontinuous awakening.” (APS 184)

<sup>17</sup> This is performed by *Peau noire, masques blancs* as it jumps between different disconnected tenses, in particular, the use of the *passé simple* in chapter five, juxtaposed with the present. I would argue that Fanon's use of the *passé simple*, a verb tense that does not exist in English, creates a time of pastness that can coexist with the present, but can also be distantiated from it and keep its opacity (in a protective move on Fanon's part, I would argue).

<sup>18</sup> Fanon calls this “une mort en deçà de la mort, une mort dans la vie.” In “Le 'syndrome nord africain” (RA 21/13).

<sup>19</sup> “Nous voudrions chauffer la carcasse de l'homme et partir. Peut-être arriverions-nous à ce résultat: l'Homme entretenant ce feu par autocombustion.” (PN 9/9/xiii) Note that carcasse has the connotation of animal remains, potentially skinned and with flesh/bones exposed. Here Fanon's touch does the reverse of Merleau-Ponty's (which reduces the other hand to an envelop or sack).

<sup>20</sup> Morrison 2004, 323.

<sup>21</sup> “Il touche, il palpe, il percute, il interroge, mais il n'obtient que des gémissements, il repalpe, derechef percute, et le ventre se contracte, se défend... Il ne 'voit rien.” (RA 15/7)

<sup>22</sup> This need to abide within experience, rather than survey it and map its end, is at the source of Fanon's critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Orphée noir*. (PN 131-2/135/113-14)

<sup>23</sup> “De temps à l'autre, on a envie de s'arrêter. Exprimer le réel est chose ardue.” (PN 134/137/116) <sup>24</sup> See PN

135/138/117 and PN 225/231/206.

<sup>25</sup> “Le Noir qui entre en France change parce que pour lui la métropole représente le Tabernacle.” (PN 21/23/7) When he returns, he has a new bearing and phenotypical mutations; he has been consecrated, like a “demi-dieu” (17/19/3). Speaking “proper French” makes him “quasi-blanc.”

<sup>26</sup> Fanon's critique of Octave Mannoni's method is relevant here: “M. Mannoni n'a pas essayé de ressentir par le dedans le désespoir de l'homme de couleur en face du Blanc. Je me suis attaché dans cette étude à toucher la misère du Noir. Tactilement et affectivement. [...] il ne m'a pas été possible d'être objectif.” (PN 84/86/67) <sup>27</sup> Actively or

passively, but consciously. Also PN 163/168/146.

<sup>28</sup> In particular, Fanon is criticizing Octave Mannoni's *Psychologie de la colonisation*, which argues that the Malagasy have an aptitude to be colonized, because of their dependency complex to their ancestors. (PN 92/95/75)

<sup>29</sup> The power of the affect of hunger in slavery, not only for food, but for kin, memory, love, and intersubjective touch can be read in Morrison 2004. Also see Wehylie 2014. I add the affect of mourning here—to be able to take time to mourn, without having to move on; we should remember that French colonialism instituted restrictions in Madagascar on Malagasy death rituals.

<sup>30</sup> Fanon notes: “il devient ardu de descendre à un niveau où les catégories de sens et de non-sens ne sont pas encore employées” (PN 9/9/xiii).

<sup>31</sup> Just as ontology is unattainable: “toute ontologie est rendue irréalisable dans une société colonisée et civilisée.” (PN 107/109/89)

<sup>32</sup> Fanon plays on the sense of “liquider” as liquidating and making fluid. (PN 118-19/121-22/100-1) <sup>33</sup> This

recalls Césaire's description of colonialism as gangrene and rot (1955, 12, 31). <sup>34</sup> Fanon calls this “the racial redistribution of guilt” (PN 101/103/83).

<sup>35</sup> My thinking here is indebted to Medina 2013, Mills 2007, Stoler 2011, and PN 192/199/175.

<sup>36</sup> The racialized subject lacks “ontological resistance,” to use Fanon's term (PN 108/110/90). This means that coevalness needs, at minimum, simultaneous radical reconfiguration at the structural and ontological levels.

<sup>37</sup> “Tétanisation affective” (PN 110/113/92) is used by Fanon in medical and metaphorical senses inseparably. See also

Fanon 2002, 280 and Fanon 2006, 11–25 on “the North African syndrome” for how muscular contractions and ticks were constructed in colonial psychiatry to be symptomatic of Arab inactivity and “paresse.”