

**FRANTZ FANON BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS (1952):
CH. 5: "THE FACT OF BLACKNESS"**

It is the primacy of biology, the fact of his black skin colour, which determines his existence. This becomes all the more important given that the negro does not, indeed, cannot live in isolation of other people or cultures. Particularly important is the fact that, as Fanon puts it (gesturing towards Hegel's Master/slave dialectic), "not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (110). Accordingly, it is the black pigment in his/her skin which marks the negro as different from the European, and which inaugurates what Fanon describes as a "real dialectic between my body and the world" (110). Skin-colour is in and of itself neutral but humans impose significations upon it, sometimes positive and sometimes negative. Accordingly, black is a colour in and of itself neutral but European civilisation has historically imposed certain pejorative connotations upon it. The "burden" (111) of this "corporeal malediction" (111) has been placed upon the negro, Fanon argues, "by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" (111).

Accordingly, the psychological trauma which the negro undergoes is derived from his or her confrontation with all the racist stereotypes historically directed within European culture against persons with a darker skin-colour:

I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism [*sic*], racial defects, slave-ships. . . . I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? (112)

It is not accidental, perhaps, that the metaphor which Fanon employs here is one of castration (indicating that the negro plays the role of Other to the European that is analogous to the role of Other played by the female with regard to the male). The end-result is that my "body was given back to me," Fanon writes, "sprawled out, distorted, recoloured, clad in mourning in that white winter day" (113).