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Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue

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Nearly forty years after his death, social philosopher Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) remains a towering intellectual figure. Born in Guadeloupe and trained as a psychologist in France, Fanon rejected his French citizenship to join the Algerian liberation movement in the 1950s. A brilliant scholar who developed the theory that some neuroses are socially generated, Fanon's revolutionary works—The Wretched of the Earth, Toward the African Revolution, and Black Skin, White Masks—spurred an African intellectual awakening.

The rebirth of Fanonism today in universities and the English-speaking world is a testament to his relevance. Edited by distinguished African-studies professor Nigel C. Gibson, Rethinking Fanon opens with an authoritative biography which corrects fallacious assertions about Fanon's life, situating him in Marxism, Negritude, Pan-Africanism, and the historical context of postwar decolonization, specifically the Algerian revolution. Section one is highlighted by extended discussions of Marx, Fanon's theories on sophisticated forms of cultural racism, and "true liberation."

The next section examines Fanon's humanist philosophy, his philosophical and geographical journeys, and his attitude toward the necessity of revolution. Also included is Homi Bhabha's well-known essay "Remembering Fanon," which contemplates the seeming rejection of Fanon in Britain in the 1970s, in contrast to his major following in America and the influence of Fanon on South African writer Steven Biko.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Edward Said discuss the importance of the 1980s' and 1990s' cultural and literary debates on Fanon. Gates notes that Fanon has been reinstated -not as a global theorist of "third world" revolution, but instead as a critic of English writers and British romanticists. Benita Parry reexamines African nationalism and liberation, and sheds new light on Fanon's questions of identity and agency.

This excellent collection reflects the continuing impact of Fanon's thought on African-American and African studies, feminism, postcolonialism, and cultural studies.

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